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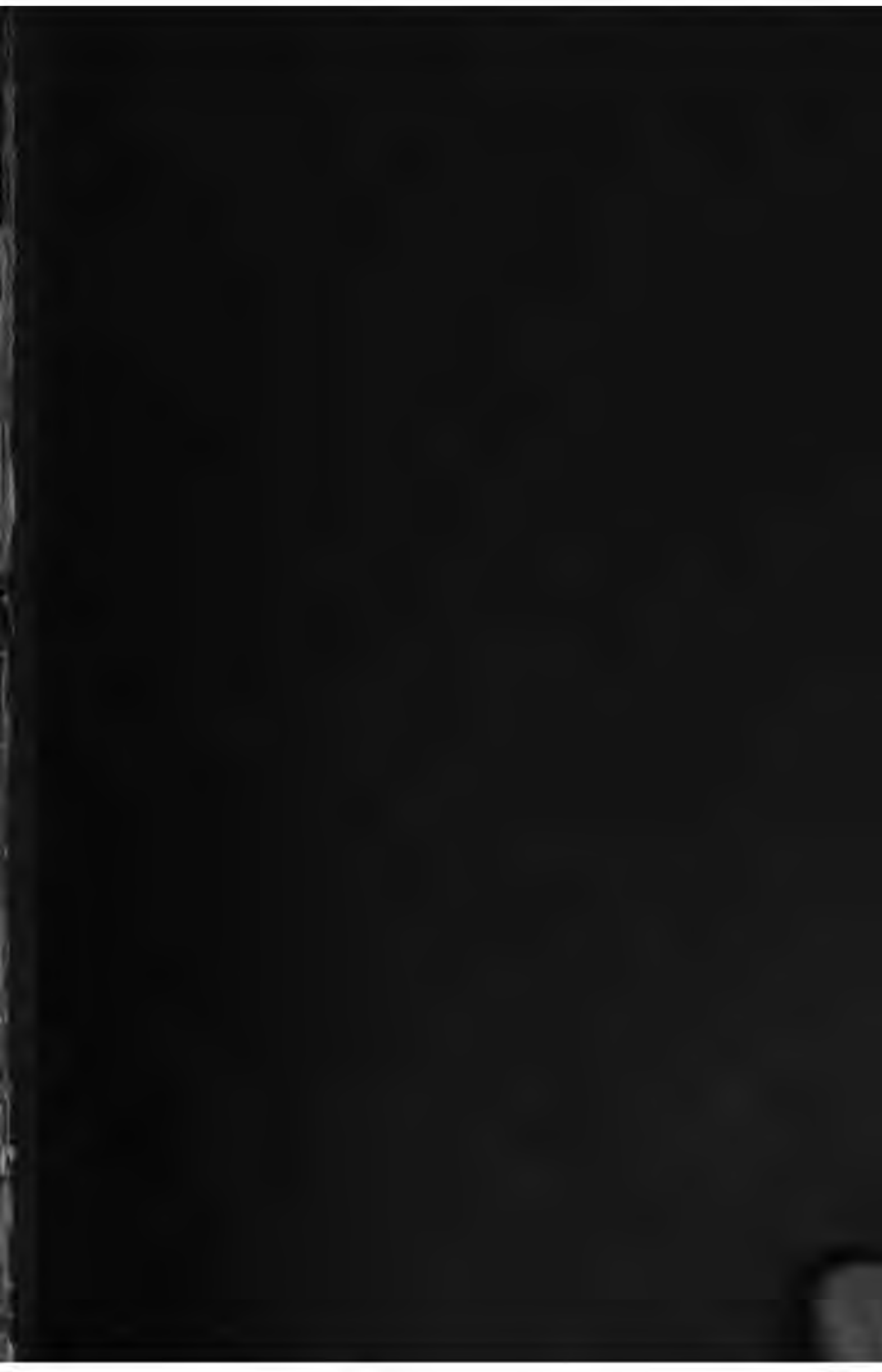
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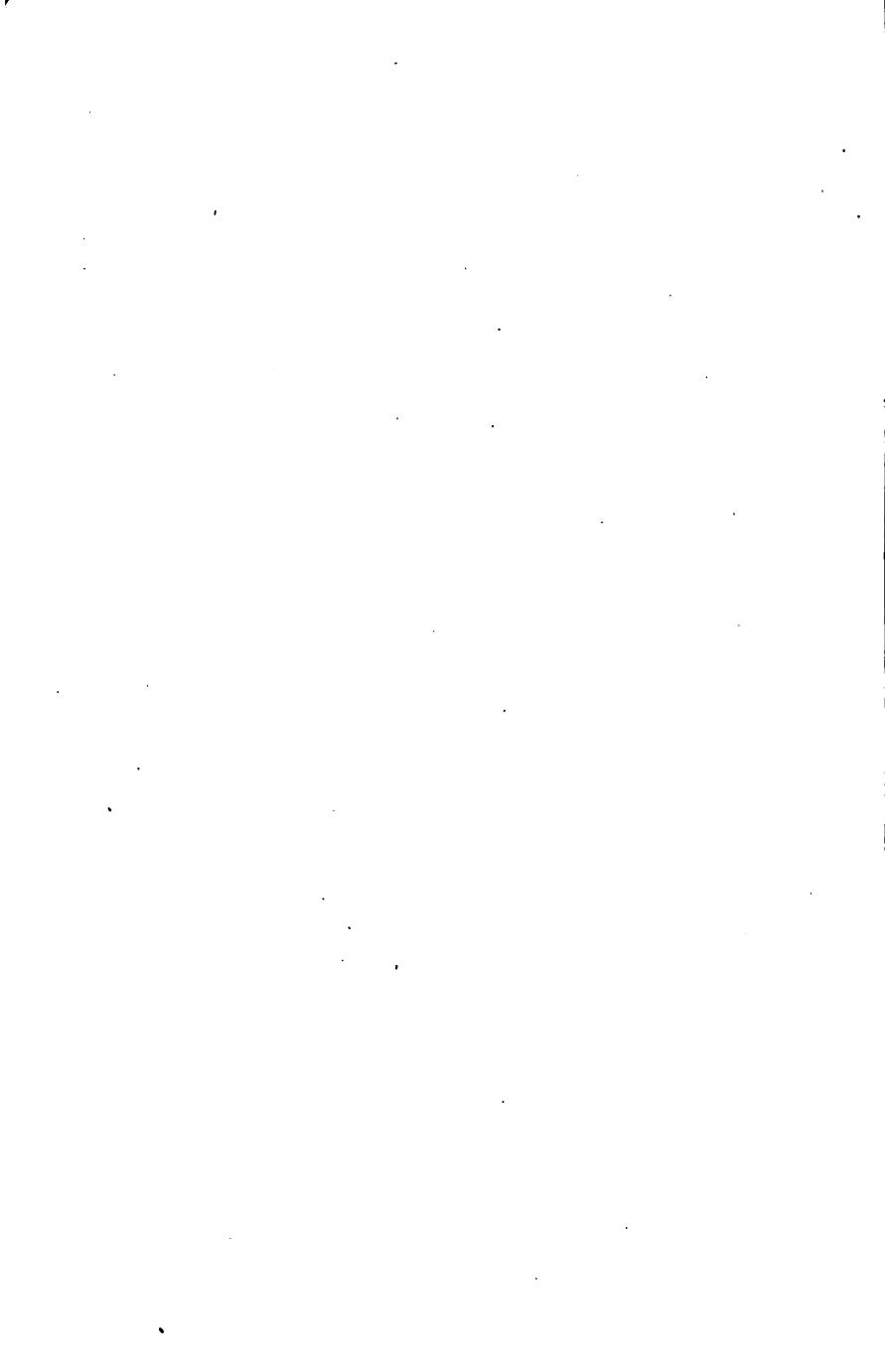
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A GIRTON GIRL

VOL. I.

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AND PARLIAMENT STREET

A GIRTON GIRL

BY

MRS ANNIE EDWARDES

AUTHOR OF 'ARCHIE LOVELL' 'OUGHT WE TO VISIT HER?' ETC.

'O Women, Women! O our frail frail sex!
No wonder tragedies are made from us.
Always the same: nothing but loves and cradles'

The Revolt of the Women (ARISTOPHANES)

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.



LONDON

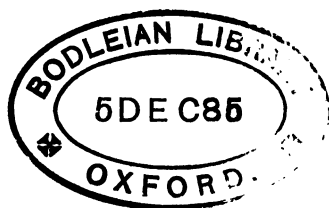
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A GIRTON GIRL.

CHAPTER I.

TRIANGULAR FRIENDSHIP.

‘THE foundations of Newnham and of Girton may be deep,’ observed Gaston Arbuthnot, in his pleasant, level, semi-American voice. ‘The foundations of the Gogmagog Hills are deeper! Girl wranglers may come, girl optimists may go. The heart of woman remains unchanged. And the heart of woman——’

But a plate piled with luscious Guernsey strawberries happening to be placed, by a jaunty Norman waitress, under Gaston’s nose, the generalisation, for the moment, ended abruptly.

Guernsey. Imagine that dot of granite washed round by such blue as our western

Channel shows in June; imagine carnation-smelling sunshine, a friendly trio of young persons breakfasting, with appetite, on the lime-shaded lawn of Miller's Sarnian Hotel; imagine the flutter of a muslin dress, the presence of a beautiful girl of two-and-twenty, and the opening scene of this little drama lies before you.

I may add that the friendship of the three persons was a paradox, as the reader of the succeeding pages shall be brought to see.

'The heart of woman tends towards marriage. Well, a picturesque revival of Lady-Jane-Greyism,' went on Gaston Arbuthnot, as his plate of strawberries subsided, 'may be safe enough—to the Lady Jane Greys! Especially in an age when women, young or old, are by no means given to losing their heads. But let the Roger Aschams who bear them company look to it! This young person whom you, Geoffrey, propose to coach is probably neither worse nor better than her sisters. The man-hating story I flatly disbelieve. Marjorie Bartrand may or

may not go to Girton. She is sure to prove herself a very woman in the end.'

'Unfortunately, you flatly disbelieve so many things.' As she spoke, Gaston's wife transferred a monster strawberry from her own plate to her husband's. 'You told me, only yesterday——'

'Dinah, my love,' interrupted Gaston, with good humour, 'never remind a man who has well dined or well breakfasted of what he said yesterday. In what state were one's nerves twenty-four hours ago? Was the wind in the east? Had our perennial duns arrived from England? Had our cousin Geoffrey been reading pauper statistics at us? Each or all of these accidents may have engendered scepticism which at this moment is replaced by the child-like faith born of idleness and a fine digestion.'

And Dinah's strawberry, encrusted by sugar, delicately dipped in Guernsey cream, was placed between Gaston's white teeth, savoured and swallowed.

It was not part of Mr. Arbuthnot's philo-

sophy to refuse any little choice morsel that the world, artistic, intellectual, or physical, thought fit to offer him.

He was a handsome man verging on his thirtieth year : tawny-bearded, fair, with hands that Titian or Velasquez might have loved to paint, and a profile of the type commonly known as Bourbon. (Although he may not play the first part in this or any other drama, one has a feeling that Gaston should advance to the footlights, make his bow, a good minute before his fellow-actors leave the slips.) His eyes were shrewd and near together, their colour and their expression alike prone to shift if a stranger sought, too persistently, to investigate them.

With a first look you felt sure that Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot bore a brain. You felt equally sure, with a second, that the opinion was shared, even to exaggeration, by Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot himself.

In dress, it was his pleasure to affect Bohemianism. On this particular June morning

Gaston wore a brown velveteen coat, a spun silk shirt, a white sombrero hat, the well tailored man becoming only more conspicuous under the disguise. What smaller things shall be said of him? That he had been brought up as a child in Paris, the only son of a valetudinarian American widow, and spoke French to this hour with a better accent than English, rolling his 'r's' and clipping his vowels like a born denizen of the boulevards. Item : that he had a fair English girl for his wife ; item : a loyal, rough-hewn Scottish cousin for his friend—the Dinah and Geoffrey who, breakfasting with appetite although their discourse was of sentiment, made up the paradoxical little group under the lime-trees at which we have glanced.

Let us turn to Geoffrey next, leaving Dinah, as I see they leave the first actress in the theatrical advertisements,' for the bottom of the list.

The cousinship of the Arbuthnots might be divined at a glance, although, reviewed feature by feature, the two men were notably unlike in

their likeness. Both were tall, both were wiry of build, both held their heads high, going along life's road as though the world, taken from whichever point of view you liked, were decidedly a place worth living in. Here the likeness ended. Gaston, indeed, would declare that by virtue of his mother's Yankee blood, and his own Parisian instincts, they were less related, physically, than any ordinary cousin-germans.

One overwhelming difference between them was patent. Geoffrey was no beauty-man! When he was the freshest of freshmen, five or six years before the morning of this Guernsey breakfast, Geff went in, one November night, for a little bit of guerilla fighting in the Cambridge streets, which, without quenching the guerilla spirit, effectually left a beauty-spoiling brand upon himself for the remainder of his life.

It happened thus. Geoffrey, raw from school, had newly carried off one of the scholarships best worth winning in the Uni-

versity. Although brave, manly, impetuous, the lad's hours were early, his habits sober. He belonged, indeed, to a class which young gentlemen, fond of their pleasure, and of modest mental gifts, are apt to label during their first two terms of residence under the generic name of smug. Well, with an old schoolmate, less versed in Greek than himself, Geff had been drinking coffee and conning over such portions of Plato as would be wanted by his friend for the coming Little Go. He was midway on his way back to his scholar's attic in John's when, turning sharply round a corner of Petty Cury, he found himself in the thick of a small but classic 'town and gown.' A brace of undergraduates, raw as himself, held a mob of roughs at bay; stones, oaths, and brickbats flew about with Homeric profusion. A fine Cambridge drizzle gave atmosphere to the scene. Police, bull-dogs, proctors, were beneath the horizon.

With no other weapons than his fists and his Plato, Geff rushed to the fore. In those early days he had neither the weight nor the

staying power which on many a well-contested football field have since made his name a terror to the foe and a tower of strength to All England. He had, however, the force born of will, of brain, of generous impulse. Ere twenty seconds had sped, Plato, with all the Platonic philosophy, went to the winds, and the biggest, brawniest of the roughs, stoutly gripped about the neck-cloth region, gave tokens of surrender.

Unfortunately for Geff's beauty, his antagonist's left hand held a broken stone bottle. As the ruffian felt himself reel to earth, he swung the missile, with dastard might, into the Scotch lad's face, cutting his nose and forehead very literally to the bone. There came a cry of 'Proctor!' There was the shuffle of departing feet. Then Geoffrey, blinded, stunned, fell into a bull-dog's arms and heard the usual proctorial question as to name and college, addressed with the usual calm proctorial courtesy to himself.

It was a week before the Little Go exams.; and Geoffrey Arbuthnot, as soon as the surgeons

could strap his face into a grim resemblance of humanity, went down.

The incident in nowise lessened his Cambridge reputation. Although he eventually came out eighth in the Classical Tripos, it is not known that the most foolish tongue called Arbuthnot of John's a smug again; tacitly, he was recognised, even by pleasure-loving young gentlemen, as one of that queer 'good-all-round sort' in whom the defects of bookishness and staid living are condoned by certain sterling natural virtues—glorious muscle, unconquerable pluck. 'Virtues that a man can't help, don't you know, if they are born in him!' And which, confusing to the pleasure-loving intelligence though such facts may be, do certainly, in the long run, bring public credit to the Alma Mater.

But the blow from his street antagonist had marred Geoffrey Arbuthnot's looks for life.

Strength, loyalty, gentleness were written large upon his face. His dark, somewhat sunken eyes had in them the glow of an intellect high

above the level of his handsome cousin! His smile, though Geff did not resemble the family of Bourbon, was finer, because sweeter, more wholly human than Gaston's. But his looks were marred. That rugged cicatrice across nose and forehead could never wear out, and Geoffrey possessed not the thousand little drawing-room graces that, in some women's sight, might go far towards rendering such a blemish 'interesting.' His hands, however firm, lithe, adequate for a surgeon's work, did neither suggest Titian nor Velasquez to your mental eye. His dress bespoke the student. His French was grotesque. Although a second Bayard in his reverence for abstract Woman, he had no small attentions for concrete idle ladies.

Garden parties Geoffrey Arbuthnot evaded; dancing parties he abhorred. In regard to matrimony he would shake his head, not holding it a state meet for all men.

Concerning this latest clause, however, the reader shall learn more when we come to ask why the triangular friendship of the persons

breakfasting together under the shadow of Mr. Miller's limes was paradoxical.

'Yes,' resumed Gaston Arbuthnot, tilting himself to the outside limit of equilibrium on his garden chair, and clasping his arms, with a gesture admirably suggestive of habitual laziness, above his head, 'look the position in the face for one moment, and you reduce it to an absurdity. No girl of seventeen has ever yet been a man-hater ; has she, Dinah ?'

'I was not,' admitted Mrs. Arbuthnot frankly, although she blushed. 'But Miss Bartrand of Tintajoux, young though she is, has gone through disappointment. Mrs. Miller told me so when I showed her the paper with the advertisement. Miss Bartrand, more than a year ago, was engaged to the major of some English regiment stationed in Guernsey.'

'Is that a disappointment, my love ?'

'The major of the regiment proved a sorry character,' said Dinah gravely. 'Miss Bartrand found out that he had broken the heart of some poor girl at a former garrison town.'

‘And, from that hour forth, swore to look on all men as in the conspiracy,’ interrupted Gaston. ‘What breadth of discrimination, what knowledge of the world, these simple-seeming schoolgirls occasionally show!’

‘When I was eighteen, that spring I went to stay with Aunt Susan at Lesser Cheriton, I knew no more of the world’s ways than a baby, did I, Geff?’

‘The philosophers are divided as to how much a baby does know,’ answered Geoffrey, fixing his dark eyes with discrimination upon Mrs. Gaston Arbuthnot’s face.

‘There is an unexpected parry for you, my dear girl.’ Shifting his chair away from the table, Dinah’s lord began to fold himself a loose, or Spanish-modelled cigarette. Pipes and cigars of ordinary goodness Gaston would no more smoke than he would swallow any of the popular fluids known among Britons as wine. He had the virtue of facile temperance, wore the blue ribbon of a fastidious taste. Unless his small luxuries were of the choicest, he could

at any time fill the anchorite's rôle without effort. 'You had better apply to your own lawful husband, Dinah, than to Geff, when you want a compliment.'

'I apply to Geoffrey when I want truth.'

Dinah made this answer, unconscious of the slight irony her speech conveyed.

'The truth! When a pretty woman talks of truth,' cried Gaston, 'she means, "Give me the biggest, most sugared lump of praise that my moral gullet will enable me to swallow."' '

Mrs. Arbuthnot had been married close upon four years. Yet was she so much in love with Gaston still as to colour rosy red at the doubtful flattery of this remark.

She was a blonde, amply framed Devonshire girl, in the fresh summer of her youth. 'Not a lady,' according to the traditions of small social courts, the judgments of smaller feminine tribunals. Dinah's lips could scarcely unclothe before ineradicable accents of the west country working folk informed you that Gaston Arbuthnot, like so many artists—poor dear im-

pressionable fellows!—had married beneath him. Not a lady, as far as the enunciation of certain vowels, the absence of certain petty artificialities of female manner were concerned, but with the purity of April dawn on her cheeks, the wholesome work-a-day qualities of a long line of yeoman progenitors in her heart.

About most women's charms men are prone to hold contradictory opinions. What world-renowned beauty but has at times felt the cold breath of adverse criticism? A smile from Dinah's pensive mouth, a gleam from Dinah's serious eyes, appealed to all beholders. Tottering old gentlemen would turn, with spectacles hastily adjusted, to wonder; fine ladies cast looks of despair after her from their carriages; young men of every sort and condition would lose their peace, if Dinah did but demurely walk along London pavement or provincial street. She was an altogether unique specimen of our mixed and over-featured race: white and rose of complexion; chiselled of profile, with English-coloured hair (and this hair is neither gold

nor flaxen nor chestnut, but a subdued blending of the three); eyebrows and eyelashes that matched; a nobly cut throat; and the slow, calm movements that belong in all countries to the fair large Madonna-like women of her type.

Madonna. The word in connection with poor Dinah must awaken instant visions of sock-knitting and of pinafore-mending! Gaston's wife was, in truth, a very ideal of sweet and gracious motherhood. Gladly you would have imagined her, girt round by a swarm of toddlers, with eyes and cheeks like her own, to be bequeathed, a priceless heirloom, to future generations. But Dinah had no living child. And round Dinah's mouth might be discerned lines that should certainly not have found their way thither at two-and-twenty. And in Dinah's low country voice there was a lilt at times of unexpected sadness. Round some corner of her path Dull Care, you felt, must lurk, stealthily watchful. At some point in the outward and visible sunshine of her married life there must be a blot

of shadow. A woman like Dinah could be hit through her affections only. Her affections were centred painfully—I had almost written morbidly—on one subject. And that subject was Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot, her husband.

‘If Miss Bartrand be a hater of men, a scorner of marriage, so much the easier prospect for me,’ said Geoffrey. ‘At the present time I look upon myself as an educational machine to be hired out at so much an hour. I have no more mind to put on company manners for Miss Marjorie Bartrand than for any thick-headed fresher I was vainly endeavouring to get through Little Go.’

‘You? It depends, rather, on what Miss Marjorie Bartrand has a mind for,’ observed Gaston Arbuthnot, with the certainty born of larger experience.

‘Happily, the wording of the advertisement shows that Miss Bartrand means work. We have it here.’

Geoffrey looked down the columns of a small, blue, badly printed local newspaper, half

French, half English, that lay open on the breakfast table.

‘“Tutor wanted. I, Marjorie Bartrand of Tintajoux, need a coach to prepare me for Girton. Classics and mathematics. Six hours a week.—Apply, personally, at Tintajoux Manoir, after six p.m. An Oxford or Cambridge man preferred.”’

‘Does any one know if Marjorie Bartrand is handsome?’ exclaimed Gaston, with sudden animation. ‘Dinah, I adjure you to find out the truth in this matter. The women of the hotel would at least repeat the popular island beliefs. “An Oxford or Cambridge man preferred.” The crystalline artfulness of the clause touches one, from a girl who makes pretence at misanthropy.’

‘But surely, Gaston, you would not——’

‘I would do most things. My classics were unfairly judged of by my college tutor. My mathematics,’ Gaston confessed, with his air of unreliable fatuity, ‘never existed. Still, I kept all my terms, except, of course, the hunting

terms. And I succeeded—as far as I went! If I passed no exams., I was at least never spun. I am as much a Cambridge man as Geoffrey is. I feel more than disposed to apply to Miss Marjorie Bartrand myself.'

The muscles about Dinah Arbuthnot's delicately carved mouth trembled.

'You would tire before the first lesson was over,' said Geff, watching Dinah, while he addressed Dinah's husband. 'You want my incentive, Gaston, filthy lucre. My terms as a coach in Guernsey are five shillings an hour. Five sixes are thirty. Yes, reading classics and mathematics with Miss Bartrand will just pay half my weekly hotel bill, supposing I am not lucky enough to get other work.'

'And you don't care a straw whether Marjorie Bartrand is pretty or plain? My dear Geff, if ever fortune brings you to the stage, take the part of Joseph Surface, for my sake. It would suit you to admiration.'

CHAPTER II.

P O K E R T A L K .

ERE Geoffrey had had time to retaliate, a factor of no common importance was destined to enter the difficult problem of Dinah Arbuthnot's happiness. Holding the corner of her apron before her lips, the jaunty French waitress tripped up a pathway leading from the hotel to the lime-shaded lawn, and placed a lady's card between Gaston's hands.

‘Une dame. . . Mais, une petite dame qui demande Monsieur!’

And the serving-woman's eyes took in the whole space of blue mid-heaven at a glance. Obviously this Norman waitress, with acumen derived from an older civilisation than ours, was mistress of the situation.

In a second of time Dinah had glanced over her husband's shoulder.

‘Mrs. Thorne. Who is Mrs. Thorne? What is that written in pencil? “*Née* Linda Constantia Smythe.” Gaston, what is the meaning of “*Née*?’

I am bound to add that Dinah pronounced the monosyllable as ‘knee.’ And a red spot showed on Gaston Arbuthnot's cheek.

From his precocious boyhood up, it had been a belief of Gaston's that lady-killing was an open accomplishment; the established means of defence, as much an art to be learnt as the means of attack. And still, at the sight of those poor pencil-marks, at the thought of the youthful evenings when Linda Constantia used to hand him cups of weak tea, flavoured atrociously with cinnamon, in the salon of a remembered Paris entresol, the conscience of the man was touched.

As Dinah's voice asked the meaning of the word ‘knee,’ he changed colour.

‘Linda Constantia Smythe. What an ab-

surdly small world we inhabit! You and I, my love, and Geoffrey, coming across poor Linda Constantia! *Faites entrer cette dame,*' he added, turning to the waitress. 'An absolutely forgotten acquaintance of a hundred years ago, Dinah—an acquaintance of times before I had heard your name. Linda married—no, did not marry; went out to India, a spinster, and returned, poor soul! the wife of a Doctor Thorne. They say, in these Channel Islands, a man will run across every mortal he has known, or is fated to know, from his cradle to his grave.'

'You never told me of your acquaintance with any Linda Constantia Smythe. I wonder you recollected her name so instantly, Gaston.'

'Easier, perhaps, to recollect the name than the lady. Can it be possible that this is she?' A cream-coloured parasol, a great many yards of cream-coloured cambric, were advancing with agitated flutter across the lawn. 'By Jupiter! how these meagre women age when they once cross the line. Can this be the walk

one has admired, I know not how oft? Are those the shoulders? . . . My dear Mrs. Thorne,'—Gaston Arbuthnot rose to meet his visitor, thoroughly warm, thoroughly natural of manner; and Dinah, with a sensation of insignificance only too familiar to her, sank into the background—'this is too kind! Doctor Thorne well, I hope? And your little daughter? You see I have watched the first column of the *Times*. About your own health I need not ask. And so you have really given up India—have made a settlement in Guernsey! Dinah, my love, let me introduce you to one of my very early Parisian friends. My wife—Mrs. Thorne.'

Dinah bowed with the staid gravity that in her case, as in that of some other lowly-born people one has known, came so near to the self-possession of breeding. Mrs. Thorne was effusive.

Gaston felt an honest artistic satisfaction in watching the contrast the two young women presented to each other.

Linda Thorne's figure was lithe, straight,

thin; the sort of figure that ever lends itself kindly to the setting forth of such anatomical deformities as shall have received the last approving seal of Parisian fashion. Her eight-buttoned long hands were pleasingly posed. She wore a great deal of frizzled darkish hair on a forehead that, but for this Cupid's ambuscade, might have been overhigh. Traces of rice-powder, at noon of a June day, were not absent from Mrs. Thorne's India-bleached cheeks. Her eyes were big, black-lashed, green. Her nose was flat, giving somewhat the Egyptian Sphinx type to a personality which, with all its demerits, was by no means void either of allurements or distinction.

If Linda had spoken perfect grammar, in a London tone, and with a taught manner, you would have set her down, perhaps, as an actress from one of our good theatres. Speaking, as she did, at utter grammatical random, with the slightest little bit of Irish accent, and no manner at all, imagination might suggest to you that Dr. Thorne's wife belonged to some

lost tribe of nomad Lords or Honourables. And the suggestion would be correct. Linda's grandfather was an Irish earl ; a hare-brained gentleman not unknown to the newspaper editors of his day, but with whose deeds, good or evil, with whose forfeited acres, domestic relations, or political principles, our story has no concern.

Linda grasped Mrs. Arbuthnot's hands ; drawing her towards herself with such warmth that Dinah's unsmiling face rose higher in air. She had an instinctive, a horrible dread that this old Parisian friend of Gaston's, this lady of the green eyes, rice-powdered cheeks, and effusive manner, might be going to embrace her.

‘A pleasure, and an immense surprise to meet like this !’ Mrs. Thorne took in with one long look the blooming fairness of the girl Gaston Arbuthnot had married, then dropping Dinah's hands, she turned coolly away. ‘I heard of your arrival here, Mr. Arbuthnot, from Colonel de Gourmet.’

‘Colonel de Gourmet is——’

‘Our island authority in all matters of taste, from the dressing of a salad to the delivery of a sermon. He said you looked like a man who would understand the meaning of the word “dinner.” That is the highest praise Colonel de Gourmet can give.’

‘I appreciate the compliment immensely.’

‘You must appreciate the Colonel by meeting him at our house. Somehow, I fancied you were alone. I thought stupidly, you had come to Guernsey for art reasons, and as a bachelor.’

So her visit was deliberately not intended for the wife; after such a declaration, could not involve the necessity of the wife’s future acquaintance! The keen blood quickened on Dinah’s cheek. Dinah’s husband was unmoved. Should it be counted as strength or as weakness, as fault or as virtue, that no small feminine by-thrust at his lowly-born wife ever shook the outward composure of Gaston Arbuthnot?

‘No, Dinah is with me. We are just starting on somewhat lengthy travels. We mean to spend the early summer here, Mrs. Thorne. In autumn we shall ramble leisurely on towards the South of France, and in winter make a settlement of some kind in Florence. In Florence, greatly to my wife’s satisfaction, I am pledged to do serious work.’

‘Yes? And is it true, then, that you are a sculptor by profession, that you have become an artist to the exclusion of other aims? Of course there is a way of looking at things which makes such a life seem the most charming possible.’ Mrs. Thorne clasped her thin clever hands as though entering some mysterious general protest against art and its followers. ‘And still, one has regrets. I was foolishly ambitious about you, if you remember, Mr. Arbuthnot. In our romantic boy-and-girl Paris days, I quite thought you were to get into Parliament. To be the people’s friend. A kind of second Mirabeau. To make a tremendous name.’

Gaston Arbuthnot’s face for a second be-

trayed sincere perplexity. When was Linda Constantia ambitious in her hopes about his intellectual future? At what period of that shallow flirtation, a decade of years ago, could dreams of a seat in the House of Commons, and of Parliamentary victories, have been possible to her?

‘I am open to flattery, Mrs. Thorne. When does a mediocre man not glory in the fine things which, according to his friends, he might have done? Yet it seems to me I never held a political opinion in my life.’

‘You once held very strong ones. Why, in a letter you wrote me after—after we had said good-bye in Paris, you were so nobly warm, I remember, about the English lower classes! Our sisters and brothers in the alleys, whose claims that dear, immortal Mrs. Browning so beautifully reveals to us.’

Gaston Arbuthnot, at this mention of a letter, felt the ground grow solid beneath his feet.

‘I must have written to you from Cam-

bridge; for the moment, perhaps, had taken up some of Geff's fads. Let me introduce my cousin, by-the-by. Geoffrey Arbuthnot—Mrs. Thorne.'

Mrs. Thorne, who knew that in Geoffrey Arbuthnot she would never have a friend, smiled ambrosially. Geff rose. He gave the lady the lowest, at the same time the coldest bow in the world. It was a true case of elective dislike at first sight.

'Yes,' went on Gaston, 'I remember.' He drew forward a garden-chair, into which Mrs. Thorne—no unpleasing picture in her broad Leghorn hat, her cambric morning gown, her eight-buttoned gloves, her cream-coloured sunshade—sank gracefully. 'I had taken up one of Geff's fads. The British Workman was an epidemic among all classes of Cambridge undergraduates that term. Get hold of your poorer brother in his hour of sobriety—that is to say, on a Friday afternoon. Present him with a bookshelf of your own carving. Explain to him the newest thing out in draining-pipes.

Show him how to make a window-box of rough cork, and present him with half a dozen slips of scarlet geranium. Humanise him—always, of course, with the capital H. Humanise him !’

‘You call work so utterly noble as this “a fad”? I assure you, Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot, I am wild myself about the working classes. At this very moment I ought to be visiting among my district people.’

Mrs. Thorne’s eyes offered Geoffrey a glance of tentative sympathy.

‘Different men come to the same end by different roads,’ said Gaston. ‘Your greatest English authority on culture declares that any man with a dash of genius is the born elevator of others. I believe myself to have a dash—a thin streak, rather—of genius. I believe myself to be a born elevator, but it must be in my own way.’

‘And that is?’ asked Geoffrey.

‘Well, remembering the atmosphere of Barnwell and Chesterton, the scene of our early

labours, one feels sure that the geraniums must have choked for want of air. Remembering the clay soil, the neighbourhood of that oozy river, the thick air, the black ugliness,' Gaston shivered unaffectedly, 'one is sceptical even as to draining-pipes. My opinion is that the English must be regenerated by art, by sculpture notably, owing to the low price of plaster casts. Sculpture can be best studied in Italy, and I am on my road thither. But Geff and I may still be fellow-labourers in the same cause.'

Gaston rattled forth this specimen of 'poker talk' lightly, his sombrero pulled low on his forehead, his shrewd, thought-reading eyes making observation the while of Linda—Linda whom, in long-dead Paris days, he just liked too well to be ever, for one moment, in love with. And the result of his study was that, in her Leghorn hat and cambric gown and slim, eight-buttoned gloves, Linda Constantia Thorne looked undeniably picturesque.

Each attitude that she took had, he saw, been diligently learnt by heart. It was Mrs.

Thorne's habit when in town to spend her nights at the Lyceum, learning gracefulness, from the stalls, at so much an hour. Her expression savoured rather of earth than heaven. Her figure spoke of the Parisian deformity artist, not of nature. But these faults were just *les défauts de ses qualités*. Gaston could never think idiomatically save in French. A well-paying section of the art of 188- required models of Linda Thorne's type. And what artist, with pockets poorly lined, can resist the prospect of a good unpaid model?

If pure-faced Madonnas commanded the worship yielded to them of old, no need to go further than the exquisite brow and throat of his own Dinah. But pure-faced Madonnas in the nineteenth century are for the first-class sculptor. Gaston belonged to the dilettante third-rate men who execute pretty conventionalities with readiness, get money for them from the dealers, and are stirred neither by great expectation of success nor by great disappointment in failure.

In any case, so decided the quick brain under the sombrero. Linda Thorne, during half a summer here in Guernsey, must be a resource, personally, against stagnation. She had ripened into a kind of sub-acid cleverness that pleased Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot's taste. Her acquaintance opened out a not unprofitable means of spending one's hours between work and dinner. On principle, he was in favour always of the brain woman, as opposed to the sentiment woman. He chose the white rose rather than the red—his only condition being that the white rose must wear Jouvin's gloves, get her dresses from Paris, abjure patchouli, and be peremptorily certain that every inch of his, Gaston's, heart belonged to the somewhat neglected girl, with Juno face and Devonshire accent, who waited for him at home.

Before sixty seconds were over he had resolved upon soliciting Linda Thorne to be his model.

‘And while Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot chisels marble for the English pauper in some delicious

Florentine palace, you are thinking of Guernsey as an abiding-place?'

Mrs. Thorne asked the question softly of Geoffrey.

'I? Certainly not, madam. After a few weeks' holiday I am going back to my medical work in Cambridge.'

'Geoffrey won his academic honours long ago,' said Gaston. 'In my cousin Geff you behold that melancholy specimen, Mrs. Thorne—a man of genius resolutely bent on not getting on in the world. After passing eighth in the Classical Tripos of his year——'

'And finding that a Classical Tripos does not mean bread and cheese,' put in Geff with sturdy independence.

'My cousin went back to school, set up a skeleton, and began smelling evil smells out of bottles, like a good little boy of sixteen. In another year and a half he hopes to get some unpaid work in the East End of London. The worse,' added Gaston, with the hearty appreciation of Geoffrey, which was the finest thing

in his own character—‘the worse for all the wretched men and women in Cambridge whose lives are bettered by my cousin Geff’s labours among them.’

‘Re—ally? Dear, dear, it is all too noble! A veritable life-poem in prose! My husband is a man of science, too. Only in his days, you know, doctors believed in their own horrible medicines. Doctor Thorne will be charmed to make Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot’s acquaintance. You are not working quite *too dreadfully* hard here in Guernsey, I hope?’

Geoffrey detested italics, even though he might tolerate a woman who habitually employed them. Judge how he was affected by the italicised enthusiasm, applied to himself, of Linda Thorne!

‘My work in Guernsey will take the shape of pupils, if I am lucky enough to get any. My terms are five shillings an hour, madam. My tuition comprises Greek, Latin, arithmetic, a moderate quantity of algebra, and, if required, said Geff, without the ghost of a smile, ‘the use

of the globes. Perhaps you could recommend me?’

‘Oh, to be sure; I quite understand.’ Linda’s highly-wrought tones went through a diminuendo of interest, well bred but rapid, at this announcement of poverty. ‘Classics; the use of the globes; algebra; pupils.’

‘Of whom we hope we have caught one,’ cried Gaston, watching her face, gauging the extent of her sympathy for life-poems in prose. ‘You think, do you not, Geff, that you have secured Miss Marjorie Bartrand of Tintajoux?’

‘I have already offered myself in writing, and shall walk out to Tintajoux, on approval, this evening. If Miss Bartrand thinks me capable of teaching her arithmetic, also the rudiments of Greek and Latin, at five shillings an hour, the bargain will be struck.’

‘Capable!’

The exclamation came from Dinah, who until now had maintained a staid but not ungracious silence while the others talked. A certain light in Dinah’s eyes betrayed the pro-

found conviction of Geoffrey's intellect which was felt by her.

Mrs. Thorne looked, without showing she looked, at the three Arbuthnots in turn.

'You think Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot more than capable of guiding the whole combined feminine intellect of our poor little Guernsey. Do you not, Mrs. Arbuthnot?'

Linda asked this with the North Pole voice that puts the social position of a feminine questioner at so vast a distance from the social position of her questioned.

'I know nothing about intellect, except what I hear from Geoffrey and my husband. I am quite uneducated myself.'

Dinah's reply was accompanied by a large level glance from those fearless, truthful Devonshire eyes of hers. And Mrs. Thorne's eyes fell.

Gaston Arbuthnot felt the heart within him rejoice. He would honestly have liked to accord a 'Brava!' to his wife.

'A good many interpretations may be put

upon the word "uneducated,"' observed Geoffrey.

Mrs. Thorne had long known herself to be a clever woman. She felt that she was a cleverer woman than usual at this moment. Yet not a suspicion had she of the situation's actual point, not an inkling of the delicate friendship which bound Geoffrey to Dinah, and, at a somewhat lengthened distance, to Gaston.

'Ah! When you have stayed longer in our Robinson Crusoe little island—— And it is charming, is it not?'

'Quite too deliciously charming,' answered Gaston, paraphrasing Linda's own style of speech. 'And cheaper than any decently liveable place this side Italy. For the daily consideration of two five-franc pieces one gets such sunshine as cannot be bought in Great Britain, three excellently cooked meals, and the advantage of living under the same roof with members of the English aristocracy. You hear the domestic gossip, Dinah. Does not a dowager

countess, with a German lady's maid, a second husband, two pug dogs, and a wig, reside in some upper apartment of Miller's Hotel ?'

'But you will find that we are a little behindhand. Doctor Thorne and myself are sensible that there is always the insular note. Our friends are most kind, most hospitable, and of course there are the military people to fall back upon. Still, remembering other days, the intimacies of the soul, the freedom, the expansion of Indian society, Robbie and I feel we are in exile. There is a constant danger of fatty degeneration—I see Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot laughing at me—fatty degeneration of the mind.'

'Want of appreciation is the saddest thing in human life,' murmured Gaston, with a serious face. 'I am taking my wife to Florence on the outside chance that we may be recognised by the Florentines as persons of distinction. In London we are nowhere.'

'Yes. There is the insular note. Now, these Bartrands of Tintajeux. Delightful

people! Noble French family who emigrated a hundred years ago to Guernsey—such of them, I mean, as were not guillotined—dropped the ‘de’ from before their name, and settled here. Well, it is very wicked to awaken prejudice, but——’

‘Put aside all moral obligations,’ exclaimed Gaston Arbuthnot. ‘At a pass like this, dear Mrs. Thorne, it is a matter of life or death to some of us to have facts. Is Marjorie Bartrand pretty?’

With her long, gloved fingers Linda Thorne stroked down imaginary creases in her dress.

‘Marjorie ought to be pretty. I am a frank adorer of beauty, you must know. I hate to see a girl with possibilities make the least of herself. So I always contrive to give Marjorie a friendly lecture. If she would only arrange her hair differently, as I tell her, and dress like other people, and take a little reasonable care of her complexion, she might be distinctly nice-looking. All to no purpose. Marjorie is Marjorie still. Some people call

her an original. I,' said Linda playfully, 'go further. I call her an aboriginal.'

'I see her with my mind's eye. Geoffrey, accept my condolences. All these classico-mathematical girls,' observed Gaston, 'are the same. Much nose, little hair, freckles, ankles. Let the conversation be changed.'

'Marjorie has too little rather than too much nose, and is certainly too dark for freckles. It seems, Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot, that you have grown cynical in these latter days. If I were a girl again I should be wild to become a pupil of Mr. Geoffrey's—if he would have me. I should adore classics and mathematics, a touch of science even! Positively, I think one *ought* to have a smattering of biology, just as one ought to attend the ambulance classes. But we may cultivate the Graces also. Now, Marjorie carries everything to extremes. Perhaps that is only another way of saying Marjorie is a Bartrand.'

'And the Bartrands, you hinted, are, as a race, handsome?'

Never was man surer of carrying his point, by oblique if not by direct means, than Gaston Arbuthnot.

‘Handsome, stiff-necked, unrelenting. I am not talking scandal against Queen Elizabeth, mind. If I said this in their presence, both Marjorie and her terrible grandfather would feel flattered. Something softer the child may perhaps have inherited from her Spanish mother.’

(‘A Spanish mother!’ interpolated Gaston, in speculative parenthesis. ‘Southern eyes flashing at you from the handsome Bartrand face!’)

‘But Marjorie has the true family temper. She knows too much. She ascribes the worst motives to every one. She cannot forgive. About a twelvemonth ago, when the girl really ought to have been in the schoolroom, there was an unhappy little love story afloat in Guernsey.’

‘A lover who was unworthy of her, of course?’

‘That sort of thing happens to many of us,’ said Linda, examining the stitching of her

kerchief, 'and yet we women manage to forget our own wrongs and to tolerate humanity for the remainder of our lives. Marjorie, reckoning pounds, shillings, and pence by our modest insular standard, is an heiress. Well, she despises the very name of man now, because a certain rather unworthy Major Tredennis sought to marry her for her money.'

'And intends to be revenged upon us from the awful heights of Plato and conic sections! Geff, my boy, I don't envy you as much as I did a quarter of an hour ago.'

'Oh, Mr. Geoffrey will be frightfully snubbed. It is only right to prepare him beforehand.'

Mrs. Thorne raised her eyes—very fine and sparkling eyes they looked just then—to Geoffrey Arbuthnot's face.

'I shall like the sensation,' remarked Geff. 'To the usual forms of feminine caprice one should be indifferent. Snubbing means sincerity.'

'If you tell her she has worked out a proposition in Euclid right she will resent it, think

you are offering her an affront under the veil of compliment.'

'Then I will speak of the propositions, only, in which she fails.'

'If you admire the flower she holds in her hand she will throw it away. If you say the sky is fair, she will remark that, for her part, she thinks it looks like rain. Once or twice,' said Linda, 'I have met Marjorie Bartrand at some village treat or flower-show. The girl is not out, or likely to come out. She possesses *one* dress, I believe, the orthodox length of other people's! And each time I have pitied the unfortunate young men who tried to make themselves agreeable to her.'

'I am not an agreeable young man, Mrs. Thorne, either in fact or intention. Your warnings are kind, but I think even a Bartrand and an heiress will find it waste of time to snub me long.'

As Geoffrey spoke, a side gate of the hotel garden opened. The figure of a spare, wooden-structured old gentleman dressed in white

nankeen, and with a white umbrella, outspread, walked in.

‘Why, there is Robbie! My dear good husband!’ exclaimed Mrs. Thorne impulsively. ‘What in the world——’

‘Allait-il faire dans cette galère?’

The quotation was put in by Gaston in an innocent voice.

Now Dinah’s French studies had in her youth been conducted, for five terms, in a small and remote Devonshire boarding-school. Consequently she did not understand one word of the language as pronounced by Gaston. Her heart sank as she watched an amused smile play round Linda’s mouth. Already ideas were exchanged between these two people—dear friends once—from which she must, perforce, remain shut out.

‘Doctor Tho—orne! Doctor Tho—orne!’

And with playful undulatory movements of her parasol, Mrs. Linda strove to arrest her husband’s attention.

‘Linda! Bless my heart, my love, I

thought you were district visiting hours ago. Quite an unexpected pleasure.'

And, hat in hand, Doctor Thorne advanced up the path, dutifully obedient to his Linda's call, to be introduced to Linda's friends.

He was an ultra Indian-looking, ultra curry-coloured old Company's servant, considerably more than thirty years his wife's senior, with a snow-white military moustache, projecting white eyebrows, mild, tired eyes, a very thick gold chain, a puggaree, and buff shoes. You could never look at Doctor Thorne without a certain surprise that he did not live in Cheltenham; so well was his appearance in tune with your recollections of the Cheltenham promenade winter garden, Montpellier lawn-tennis courts, and club windows blossoming over with generals, admirals, and old Indians.

But in Cheltenham Linda might have hunted! Quite early after their return to Europe, Doctor Thorne made the discovery that he and his wife had two passions—Linda's for horses, his own for living within his pension.

This decided him on choosing an island for his residence.

‘Bless my heart, Linda! A positively unexpected pleasure,’ repeated the Doctor, with urbane little bows discreetly given to no person in particular.

‘You dear delicious Robbie, to turn up just when you are *so* wanted!’ cried Linda. ‘Mrs. Arbuthnot, let me introduce my husband.’ With a careless wave of the hand that said, plainly enough, this part of the ceremony might be cut as short as possible. ‘Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot. Have I not often told you, Robbie, of my old friendship for Gast—, I mean, for Mr. Arbuthnot, in Paris? Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot, a medical student from Cambridge.’

Doctor Thorne was one of the most thorough believers extant in this questioning, sceptical nineteenth-century world. He believed in his own drugs, practising, on a small but murderous scale, here in Guernsey, and holding the same pharmacopœial opinions that obtained half a century earlier in Calcutta.

He believed in the great political names he had admired when he was a schoolboy ; in the balance of power ; in the infallibility of Church, State, and the British Empire generally. He believed in the extraordinary convenience of his house, in the fitness of his furniture, in the talents of his Linda. Doctor Thorne, I should add, had a mind—curiously small, thoroughly limited, but still a mind—not badly stored with facts, of a dry and statistical order, which he loved to impart to others.

Fastening at once on Dinah—for Linda, moving a few paces distant, began to lionise the adjacent islands for Gaston's benefit, and Geff contrived to vanish from the scene—fastening on poor Dinah for his victim, Doctor Thorne at once opened a conversation with the airy didactic grace [in which old gentlemen would seem to have shone when the story-books of our infancy were written.

‘ Your first visit to the island, Mrs. Arbuthnot? Then I trust you and your worthy husband, will accept my services as your cicerone.

There is much here, I can assure you, to stimulate the interest and foster habits of observation. In the first place, you see, we have the people themselves, whose habits of frugality contrast in a marked and favourable manner with those of larger countries. You are not perhaps acquainted with the statistics of savings-banks generally?'

'I have never had anything to save in my life, sir.'

'Well, then, I can give you a few important facts. Sit down, pray. Let us protect our heads under the shadow of this delightful ash, or lime, which is it? I can give you a few details, with the amount actually saved by each person in this island over the age of fifteen. Studies of this kind captivate the softer faculty of benevolence, while they strengthen and enlarge the understanding.'

Dinah was well dowered by Nature with means of self-defence. She could put down an impertinence, I am afraid could resent an injury, as well as any fine London lady of them all.

But in Dinah's moral arsenal was no weapon for demolishing a mild little prosy gentleman of sixty-seven, with snow-white moustache, yellow shoes, and a tired smile. Some intuition she could not have analysed made her almost feel a species of pity for Linda's husband.

We do not easily experience two distinct kinds of pain at one moment. It may be that Dinah's heart was too sorely troubled for her to be sensible of boredom, even at the hands of such a master in the art of boring as the Doctor.

'That morsel of table-land in the south is Sark,' observed Linda, pointing to an outline of haze faintly towering above the dense blue of the Channel. 'And the streak nearer at hand—please don't look at me, but at the islands—the streak nearer at hand, with the sun shining on its yellow patches, is Jetho; and nearer still, where the pale green spaces mark the shallows, is Herm. I hope you are following my stage directions, Mr. Arbuthnot.'

Mr. Arbuthnot was scrutinising her face;

curiously, as one scrutinises any waif or stray from the past, suddenly brought back to one ; but tenderly, too. When does a man of Gaston's character feel aught but kindness towards the woman whose life has been a little embittered by his own fascination ?

The kindness made itself felt in his voice and look when he answered her :

‘Almost the last time you and I saw each other we followed stage directions side by side. Have you forgotten those New Year charades of Madame Benjamin’s ? ’

‘I have forgotten nothing,’ exclaimed Mrs. Thorne, with a sharpish accent. ‘I have remembered you, Mr. Arbuthnot ; I have thought of you, hoped for your happiness all these years. Now, at length, I am called upon to witness it.’

She gave a glance at Dinah patiently enduring the Doctor's statistics, then went on with a sort of effort :

‘You must let me congratulate you. I am blunt, matter-of-fact—just as I used to

be.' Certainly Linda Thorne was at no pains to modulate her voice. 'Mrs. Arbuthnot is simply beautiful. Those matchless lines of profile! Those soft waves of gold above her brow!'

'You like that way she has with her curls? I am answerable for it. It took exactly fifteen months to convince Dinah that a woman may wear short hair upon her forehead, yet save her soul alive.'

'And the lips, the chin! I believe Mrs. Arbuthnot's face is the first I have ever seen without a flaw.'

Linda spoke as one might speak of a shell cameo, of a china vase, of a lily modelled in wax.

Gaston Arbuthnot mentally translated the chill distinct tone, with edification to himself.

'Dinah's is a nature laid on large lines. She is the best possible wife for such a light-ballasted man as I.' He made this confession of faith with genuine earnestness, feeling rather than acknowledging he felt, that the speech set

his conscience satisfactorily at rest. 'Goodness matters a great deal more, does it not, Mrs. Thorne, than a beautiful face?'

'Possibly. I am ready to accept what you say. Tell me, only, you are not offended by my outspoken admiration,' she went on. 'Surely I may presume sufficiently on old—old acquaintance, to congratulate you on your marriage, on the domestic sunshine of your life?'

'It is delightful to feel that your heart is warm as ever! As a matter of priority, congratulations, Mrs. Thorne, were due to you first. Dinah and I have been married three years and three quarters, while you——'

'Oh, it makes me too old a woman to be precise about dates,' said Linda, looking away from him. 'My daughter, although she retains her ayah and her spoilt Indian ways, is a big girl, almost four years old. I hope you will visit The Bungalow soon for Rahnee's sake.'

'The Bungalow being——'

'The straggling, white, one-storied place

which you see low down under the hill to the right. That is my home, built entirely from Doctor Thorne's own plans. The ugliest house, every honest person who sees it admits, in Guernsey.'

'Not in its interior. I am certain a house inhabited by you could not be ugly.'

'Prettily said. Why, pray, in the present æsthetic age, cut off as we are from the poetic upholstery of London, should a house inhabited by me not be a great deal uglier than other people's?'

'I decline, at this hour of the morning, to be logical. One has an instinct in such things.'

'Rahnee, at least, is not ugly. I am not afraid of your judgment on our little Rahnee. Now, what is to-day?'

Gaston Arbuthnot believed it to be the fourteenth day of June, in the year of grace 188—.

'Well, then'—Mrs. Thorne's voice sank so as to be only half a tone higher than a whisper—'will you dine with us this evening, at half-

past seven? I believe,' added Linda vaguely, 'that one or two of the artillery officers may be coming to us. We do not entertain. I make a point of telling everybody that. Doctor Thorne and I do not entertain. But if our friends care to drop in unexpectedly, to eat our roast mutton with us, and smoke a cigarette with Robbie afterwards, there we are.'

It was to be a bachelor party, then. Dinah might possibly have been invited to eat roast mutton at Mrs. Thorne's table. She could, under no circumstances, be asked to smoke a cigarette with Robbie afterwards. But Gaston accepted with frank cordiality. During the years of his married life it had so grown to be a matter of course that Dinah, dear good girl! should never go into the world, that even the form of hesitation at leaving her had been dropped on the part of Dinah's husband.

'No dress coat, no white tie, *please*. In these long June evenings one likes to stroll away as far from bricks and mortar as possible. There will not be a moon to-night. Still,

even in the darkness, it will be enjoyable to breathe pure air and watch the light upon the Caskets from the jetty yonder.'

'And what do you think of my old friend?' Gaston Arbuthnot asked his wife when the Thornes had departed on their different roads, the Doctor to visit a patient in Miller's Hotel; Linda, her dress, a caviller might say, scarce fitted to the work, to her poor dear brothers and sisters in the alleys. I have listened to Linda Thorne's verdict on you. Now for the reverse of the medal. What do you think of Linda Thorne?'

'I think her vulgar.'

It was the first time Gaston had heard judgment so harsh from Dinah's lips. Hers was the least condemnatory of human souls. She shrank with a rare modesty from giving opinions on the people with whom Gaston associated, was openly unashamed always of her own lowly origin, and of her inability to discern the finer shades of a society to which she was not born.

A slight tinge of red kindled on Arbuthnot's cheek. 'Vulgar is a strong word. Women are not always generous in their strictures upon each other. Yet it happened that Mrs. Thorne was singularly generous in her criticism of you. Linda thinks you beautiful, my dear. She said yours was the first face she has ever seen without a flaw.'

'Standing close beside me as you did, Mrs. Thorne would have shown delicacy by not talking of me at all. Although I tried not to listen, I heard too well what she said. It was those flatteries of Mrs. Thorne's, for of course I am no judge of manner, which made me think her vulgar. A lady at heart would have known how you must wince on hearing me so coarsely praised.'

For one moment Gaston Arbuthnot's looks were threatening, then the cloud passed.

'I believe you are half right, my dear girl,' he observed, in his sunniest voice, and picking up his wife's hat from the spot where it had fallen at her feet. 'But people of the world

are not as transparently truthful as you, my Dinah. You shoot at the bull's eye when you do discharge an arrow, and seldom miss the mark. Now, let me tie your hat strings! Lift your chin—so! Let us wander off to the sea and forget all the insincerities, all the Linda Thornes in existence.'

The speech must have been uttered with some of the airy mental reservation that Gaston Arbuthnot's habit of 'poker talk' made easy to him. He did not for one instant forget that he was engaged to dine that evening at The Bungalow; engaged, although there was no moon to enjoy pure air and watch the light upon the Caskets from the jetty yonder.

CHAPTER III.

HAS HE A WIFE?

‘THE battle is to the strong, Marjorie Bartrand ; the race to the swift. Women have been fatally handicapped since the world began. And Nature understands her own intentions, depend upon it, better than we do.’

‘Does Nature intend one half of the human race to be ciphers?’

‘Nature intends men to have wives. There is no escaping that fact. When I was a girl we got quite as much education as society required of us.’

‘Society!’

‘We learned modern languages, French and Italian, for of course German was not in vogue, and I must say I think Italian much the more feminine accomplishment.’

‘That is paying an exceedingly high compliment to German, ma’am!’

‘And we studied English literature, solidly, not out of little green-backed handbooks. Never a day passed that I did not read Addison, or some other fine Queen Anne writer, aloud to my father. And we knew how to write a letter. And we coloured from Nature, for the love of the thing, exceedingly well, some of us, though there was no South Kensington, and we never called ourselves art students, and, and—Marjorie Bartrand, how did this conversation begin?’

‘Apropos of Spain, did it not?’

‘To be sure. Apropos of your Girton scheme, your wish to see classics and mathematics pushed into a country where women are still content to be women, and very womanly ones. University teaching for girls is a freak that will die out of itself, like coal-scuttle bonnets, bishops’ sleeves, crinoline, or any other mode that is at once cumbersome and un-beautiful.’

Afternoon sunshine was flooding the weather-

beaten lichened walls of Tintajoux Manoir. The Atlantic glittered, one vast field of diamonds, until it melted into pallid sky along the southern horizon line. The keen, cool ocean saltiness mingled with and almost overbalanced the fragrance of the pinks, heliotropes, and roses in the Reverend Andros Bartrand's old-fashioned borders. On a garden bench, at some short distance from the house, were seated two ladies, fresh of face, both ; countrified of dress ; fast friends, although more than forty years stood between their ages. A cedar of Lebanon spread wide its layers of odorous darkness above their heads. A grassplot, emerald green, close shorn, was their carpet.

‘ If your wits were your fortune, child, such ambitions might be pardonable.’ So, after a space, the enemy of progress resumed her parable. ‘ In families where the olive branches are in excess of the exchequer, the governess, Heaven help her, is expected to “ground” the boys, as they call it, in Latin grammar and Euclid. But with your grandfather’s position,

your own inheritance, putting the idea of your marriage aside——’

‘As you know I have put it, for ever and ever!’ cried Marjorie Bartrand, her whole face seeming abruptly transformed into a pair of passionate eyes. ‘Did we not decide long ago, Miss Tighe, that the word *mar*——, the word I detest so heartily, should never be spoken between us. Allow that I may not be forced, for money, to ground small boys in Latin grammar. Allow that my visions of raising Spanish girls above the level of dolls are as laughable as you all seem to find them. May I not want to bring myself, Marjorie Bartrand, up to the highest improveable point as a human being? Great in mathematics I shall never be.’

‘I am thankful, indeed, to hear you say so,’ remarked Miss Tighe, with an air of relief.

‘But even the *Seigneur* is forced to confess I might become—a fourth-rate classic! I know French and Spanish, Dogberry wise, by nature. That must help me a long way on the road to Latin. And I have learnt seventeen irregular

Greek verbs—I'm not sure about the aorists—and Mademoiselle le Patourel and I went straight through the *Apology of Plato*, with Bohn's crib.'

'Poor Sophie le Patourel! You have outgrown her, at last, as you outgrew all your previous dozen or more governesses.'

'I don't know about "outgrown." Grandpapa ridiculed our attempting Greek, from the first. You know the cruel way we Bartrands have of ridiculing under cover of a compliment! Well, one day last week, Mademoiselle le Patourel was reading the text of *Plato* aloud, not very flowingly, poor good soul——'

'Sophie le Patourel had better have kept to the millinery! Her mother made up a cap like no woman in this island.'

'And looking round she saw the Seigneur, outside the window, with a wicked smile about that handsome old mouth of his as he listened. Grandpapa made her the prettiest speech in the world about her quantities, her fine classic tastes, and her pupil. And Mademoiselle le Patourel never gave me another lesson.'

‘So now your scheme is to prepare for Girtton by yourself. Ambitious, on my word!’

‘My scheme,’ said Marjorie, lowering her voice and glancing over her shoulder to make sure her terrible grandfather, Andros Bartrand, was not within earshot—‘my scheme is to have a real University coach of my own. A Cambridge B.A. at the present time residing in Guernsey.’

Cassandra Tighe started up from her seat.

She was a spare, tall, conspicuous spinster, with a face all features, a figure all angles, a manner all energy. Her hair was bleached, as much by exposure to weather as by actual age. Her complexion was that of a frosted apple. Her dress cost her fifteen pounds a year!

Living alone with one woman-servant in a small Guernsey cottage, it may be affirmed that Miss Tighe made as much of her life as any gentlewoman of modest income, and more than sixty summers, in the British dominions. Her intellectual resources were many. She was a thorough, an inborn naturalist. She played the

harp, and with no dilettante touch, but as ladies early in the Victorian reign were wont to play that instrument. She drew. On stormy evenings, when she knew her voice could not penetrate the cottage window shutters, Cassandra confessed that she sang—such songs as ‘I see Them on their Winding Way,’ ‘The Captive Knight,’ or ‘Zuleika.’

Her popularity and her influence were widespread. The figure of Miss Tighe, in her red fishing cloak, with nets, hooks, jars, boxes, bottles, overflowing from her village cart, was familiar throughout every nook and corner of the island. If she had not had the sunniest of human hearts you might have been tempted to dub her a gossip. That good old English word, however, is associated in these days with a more than doubtful spice of malice. And men and women who had known Cassandra Tighe for thirty years averred that they had never heard an unkindly judgment from her lips. She was simply a *raconteuse*—we lack the English equivalent—a sympathiser in all the vivid varying

doings that constitute the lives of young and wholesomely happy people; a chronicler of news; a delighter in love affairs.

Simply this. And yet, not unfrequently, Cassandra Tighe made mischief. Truthful, as far as conscious veracity went, to a fault, this excellent lady's memory was in a chronic state of jumble; so stored, it may be, with polysyllabic names of plants, grubs, and fishes, that subsidiary human details had to be packed in pell-mell, and take their chance of coming out again untwisted. And, depend upon it, these tangled well-meaners, not your deliberate villains, are the cause of half the loves marred, the heartburnings, the jealousies, that make up the actual dramas, the unwritten three-volume novels of this work-a-day world!

'You are going to study with a tutor, Marjorie Bartrand! With a Cambridge B.A.! With a MAN! What does your grandfather say?'

'I have not told him the news, Miss Tighe. I grudge giving the Seigneur such intense

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pleasure. "If you insist on learning Latin and Greek," grandpapa has always said, "learn them decently. Send these trashy governesses to the winds. Be taught by a competent master." Yes,' cried Marjorie, bringing down a very small hand with very great energy on her knee, 'I grudge grandpapa his triumph, but the truth must be told. Now that I have caught him, I shall begin coaching with my B.A., my Cantab, forthwith.'

Cassandra shook her head, mournfully incredulous. She was of an age and of a disposition to which revolutionary ideas do not come with ease. There was really no place in her mental fabric for the picture of Marjorie Bartrand, here, inside the sacred walls of Tintajoux, reading classics and mathematics with a University coach.

'I think it more than likely the plan will fall through. We have no Cambridge tutors in the island, unless, indeed, you mean good old Mr. Winkworth from the High Street Academy?'

‘I mean no one belonging to Guernsey. I mean a person who—ah, Miss Tighe,’ the girl broke off, ‘I see that I must make full confession. No knowing, as grandpapa says, when you once begin to speak the truth, where the truth may land you. My B.A. is coming to arrange about terms and hours this evening.’

‘And how did he—how did any stranger man hear of you?’

‘I put an advertisement in the *Chronique Guernesiate*, three days ago.’

‘Without consulting the Seigneur! Child—you did this thing? You gave your name, unknown to your grandfather, in the public newspaper?’

‘I gave my name in the public newspaper, ma’am, and this afternoon I got an answer to my advertisement. Wait one second and you shall hear it.’

Marjorie drew a note from the breast of her frock, and with an air half of mystery, half of triumph, began to read aloud:—

“ Miller’s Hotel, Tuesday, June 14th.

“ Geoffrey Arbuthnot, B.A. Cantab., is willing to read classics and mathematics with Miss Bartrand. Terms, five shillings an hour. Geoffrey Arbuthnot will call at Tintajoux Manoir, on approval, between the hours of seven and eight this evening.”

‘ Arbuthnot? Why, this is fatality.’ Cassandra discerned a special providence, an inchoate stroke of destiny in most things. ‘ I was looking in at Miller’s Hotel last night. That reasonless creature, Mrs. Miller, has one of her throats again, and I did so want her to take some of my globules, but in vain. The ignorance of uneducated people——’

‘ And you saw my coach of the future,’ interrupted Marjorie, knowing that when Miss Tighe got into such engrossing interests as throats and globules, she must be brought back to her subject with a run.

‘ Yes, I saw Mr. Arbuthnot. A rough diamond, my dear, to speak truth.’

‘That is so much in his favour,’ said Marjorie, peeling, shred from shred, the petals of a carnation that she held between her fingers. ‘I want to do my work for Girton steadily, unvexed by the sight or thought of that most irritating of God’s creatures—a beauty-man.’

Cassandra looked hard at the girl, remembering days, perhaps, when a beauty-man, in the fullest sense of the contemptuous epithet, had scathed rather than softened Marjorie Bartrand’s heart.

‘Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot, on the score of ugliness, will meet your wishes, my dear. A rough-hewn Scotchman of the Carlyle stamp. A man who looks as though he ought to do big things in the world. A man with a scar—got, I am told, in a Quixotic pavement fight—traversing his forehead.’

‘I like the sketch. Proceed.’

‘As regards Geoffrey Arbuthnot himself, I have done. Walking at his side, the evening light falling on her uncovered head and fair face, was the loveliest sight these old eyes have

beheld for many a year—Geoffrey Arbuthnot's wife.'

'Geoffrey Arbuthnot—has he a wife?' cried Marjorie in an altered voice. 'My Cambridge B.A.—married! I hope you are sure of your facts, Miss Tighe. You know that sometimes—rarely, of course—mistakes occur in our little bits of Sarnian intelligence. You are perfectly certain that Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot is a married man?'

'I have seen his wife. How can you ask me if I am certain? "A daughter of the gods,"' Cassandra quoted, "'divinely tall," fair-skinned, large-eyed, with a look of repressed sadness about her mouth that makes her bloom and youth the more noticeable. I was sitting in poor Mrs. Miller's parlour, endeavouring to argue the woman out of taking Doctor Thorne's drugs. As a human creature, a father, a husband, I have not one word to say against Doctor Thorne——'

'I have!' exclaimed Marjorie Bartrand imperatively. 'As a human creature, a father, a

husband—most especially as a husband—I have everything imaginable to say against Doctor Thorne.’

‘As a physician, I consider him a manslaughterer. Yes,’ repeated Cassandra, with pious warmth, ‘a manslaughterer. Indeed, if I had sat at the inquest on more than one of Doctor Thorne’s departed patients, Heaven knows what verdict I should not have returned against him.’

‘But your story, Miss Tighe? The man like Carlyle; the beautiful wife. Return, please, to the Arbuthnots.’

‘Well, just as I was trying to put reason into Mrs. Miller’s weak mind, I was startled by the sight I told you of. This lovely young woman went past the window, not two yards from where I sat.’

‘With her husband. Was she leaning on Mr. Arbuthnot’s arm?’ asked Marjorie. ‘Did they look as if they had ever had a quarrel? Was she in white—bridal looking? Did you hear them murmur to each other? Miss Tighe,

be dramatic! At Tintajeux we have not the joy, remember, of eventful living.'

'Mrs. Arbuthnot was dressed in black. Her hair lay in short blonde waves on her forehead. She wore not a flower, not an ornament about her person. As they passed the window her husband remarked that he considered the roast duck and peas of which they had partaken for dinner were excellent.'

'So much,' said Marjorie, affecting cynicism, 'for a chapter of married romance.'

'Ah, that has been. The key of our common life is C major—roast duck and green peas—whatever accidental sharps and flats we may deviate into occasionally. The romance has been. I was overcome by the young woman's singular beauty,' went on Cassandra. 'I asked her name, and was rewarded by hearing such an account of them as warmed my heart. The girl belonged to the humblest class of life—a gardener's daughter, or something of the kind; and Arbuthnot, while he was still an undergraduate at Cambridge, married her.'

‘Geoffrey Arbuthnot?’

Marjorie repeated the name softly ; a question in her tone rather than in her words.

‘Geoffrey, I presume ; that is to say, most decidedly and beyond question, Geoffrey,’ answered Cassandra, with the fatal certitude of inaccuracy. ‘I am the more positive because I felt a kind of love at first sight for these two young people, and made Mrs. Miller give me details. A party of Cambridge men were staying in the hotel when first the Arbuthnots arrived ; and some of these men knew the husband by sight. He is looked upon as rather eccentric among his fellows. I am afraid, Marjorie, whenever a man leads a nobler life than other people the tendency of the day is to call him eccentric. And Geoffrey Arbuthnot’s life must be very noble.’

‘Because he had the courage of his opinions in choosing a wife?’

‘Not that, only. Arbuthnot is a student still at the Cambridge medical school, and gives such time as he has over from study to the

most miserable people in the Cambridge streets. Not proselytising, not preaching—for my part I don't believe much in a preaching young man,' said old Cassandra, whose opinions tended towards the broad; 'simply binding up their wounds as men and women. Doing the Master's work, not talking about it.'

'And his beautiful wife helps him!' exclaimed Marjorie, her sensitive Southern face aglow. 'Ah, Miss Tighe, thank you again and again for your visit and for telling me this news. In my foolish, trivial, wasted existence what a splendid bit of good fortune that I should have the chance of knowing two such people!'

Cassandra Tighe looked a little uncomfortable. She prided herself on her freedom from the prejudices of her sex; within limits, really did startle her friends, sometimes, by the free exercise of private judgment. But the liberality of a white-haired lady, whose sixty years of life have run in the safest, narrowest, conventional trammels, may differ widely from the liberality

of a hot head, an eager, self-forgetting young heart like Marjorie Bartrand's.

'It will be a fine thing for your Girton prospects, capital for your Greek and Latin, to read with Mr. Arbuthnot. But I gathered—you must take this as I mean it, Marjorie Bartrand; you have no mother to tell you things—I gathered from different small hints that Mrs. Arbuthnot is not exactly in society. That she is good and sweet and honest,' said Cassandra, 'you have only to look in her face to know; still if I were in Marjorie Bartrand's place, I should wait to see what the island ladies did in the matter of calling.'

Marjorie paled round the lips—sign infallible, throughout the Bartrand race, of rising tempest. Cassandra, knowing the family storm-signals, prepared to take a hasty departure.

'I forget time always under the Tintajoux cedars. And there is plenty for me to do at home. To-morrow Annette and I are off to Sark for five days' shore-work. Our talk about your new tutor has been an interesting one.'

‘Especially the clause that prohibits my calling on the new tutor’s wife!’

‘There is no prohibition at all. The Seigneur might safely leave his card on Mr. Arbuthnot. It would be a very pretty piece of condescension, and of course a gentleman calling upon a gentleman can lead to nothing,’ added Cassandra, rather ignobly temporising.

‘Exactly. Thank you very much, Miss Tighe, for your advice. As you say, I have no mother to enlighten me as to the dark mysteries of calling or not calling. And as I consider the island ladies too frisky for pioneers——’

‘Marjorie! Our archdeaconess, our irreproachable Guernsey matrons, *frisky?*’

‘I shall just have to act for myself. As Mrs. Arbuthnot, you tell me, has all good qualities written on her face, and knowing the fine things we do know of her husband’s life, it must be a credit to any woman—above all to an archdeaconess—to make their acquaintance.’

‘Still, if she is unused——’

‘Oh, I shall not put myself forward. If their merit is unrecognised, if narrow-minded, irreproachable people hold back from calling on them, I can understand that there may be shyness on my tutor’s part in mentioning his wife. I shall simply bide his time. I shall be silent until he chooses, himself, to speak to me of Mrs. Arbuthnot.’

‘That will be wise. Treat him, honest gentleman, as though one had not heard of his marriage. Meantime we can find out if our leading ladies, Madame Corbie especially, intend to notice her——’

‘But in my own self, I honour Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot,’ interrupted Marjorie, her face colouring like a rose at sunset. ‘I admire, honour, *love* him! I wish the world were full of such men. I hold out both hands in fellowship to him at this moment.’

Cassandra, for once, showed prescience worthy of her name. Cassandra argued no more.

CHAPTER IV.

A TRINITY BALL.

GEOFFREY ARBUTHNOT was a man of whom none could say that Fortune had been to him a too fond mistress.

As a four-foot high boy, with shrewd observant Scottish eyes, with a Scottish mind already beginning to hold its own ideas as to the universe, he was sent, through the reluctant generosity of an uncle, to a London public school. In those days sanitary and social reforms for overtaxed city schoolboys were still inchoate. Each boy must look after himself, make personal acquaintance with facts, with the cut and thrust of human circumstance, take his recreation on the London pavements, sink or swim as he listed.

Geoffrey Arbuthnot, before he was ten, had made acquaintance with a great many facts, all hard ones. He had no pocket-money, no tips. His holidays had to be paid for out of the same reluctant uncle's purse—father and mother sleeping in a Perthshire kirkyard ere Geff could well remember aught—and were enjoyed under the roof of such persons as endure homeless school-boys, on systems of rigid economy, as a business.

Hard-working to excess, perhaps because in work he found a friend, pushed into dead-language grooves because the masters sought to keep up the dead-language reputation of the school, Geoffrey Arbuthnot awoke one morning at the age of eighteen a fine classic. He was sent up to compete for a Cambridge scholarship, won it, and, true to tradition, began reading, his heart warmed by the unwonted feeling of success, for his Classical Tripos.

Considering that every aptitude he possessed lay in an opposite direction to classical study, one can scarcely look on the nine Cambridge terms that followed as fortunate. The square

man did his best to fill the round hole faithfully, his own squareness decreased not. And then, in the midst of this Greek and Latin epoch, came his love affairs—I retract the plural: his one overwhelming passion, ardent, pure as was ever love felt by man for woman; a passion which paled, ere he could well grasp it, into shadow, and which still—yes, in the Guernsey sunshine of this June day—rendered his happiness paradoxical, just at the age when happiness should be fullest, most complete.

Geoffrey Arbuthnot had not been smiled on by fortune. Nevertheless, he possessed gifts which for the simple hourly manufacture of human contentment are better worth than the bigger favours of the gods. Life interested him. If he had had few artificial pleasures, he had exhausted no pleasures at all. In regard of nature, his sensations were vivid as a child's. Walking forth to Tintajeux Manoir at an hour when the crisp blue and gold of afternoon had reached decline, Geoffrey felt youth run in his veins like wine. The hay and clover smells

from the newly-cut fields ; the ‘ kiss sweet ! kiss sweet ! ’ of the thrushes ; the verdured hedges touched still by Spring’s immaturity, though the flower of the May was past ; the peeps at every turn of purple salt water ; the road-side ferns through which, knee-deep, he waded ; the yellowing honeysuckle sprays which brushed his face ; the streamlets slipping seaward away, through channels thick with cresses and forget-me-nots ; aye, even the whiffs of wood-smoke from the farmhouse chimneys, the incomprehensible Froissart French in which he heard the haymakers chattering to each other over their bread and cider,—all the low, melodious notes of this homely landscape affected him with a physical and keen delight.

His life, since remotest baby-days, when he walked holding his mother’s hand in blithe, fair Scotland, had been passed among streets and among the human creatures who inhabit them. The pleasure of the Bethnal Green arab who, at six years old, first handles a living daisy differs, in degree only, from Geoffrey’s as

he trudged along through the Guernsey lanes, his mind vaguely fixed on Tintajeux Manoir and on the chill reception from his future pupil which there awaited him.

Would Miss Bartrand's thunder glances be discharged from black eyes or blue ones? Geoffrey had reached a stretch of undulating rushy common at the extreme western point of the island when this question presented itself. Ahead was a vista of mouldering banks, gay in their shroud of blue-flowered, ivy-leaved campanula, and with here and there a jutting tip of granite, crimson, by reason of its glittering mica, in the sunset. Above, hovered a falcon, almost lost to view against the largely-vaulted, bountifully-coloured evening sky.

Interpreting Froissart French by such lights as he possessed, Geoffrey learned from an ancient goat-tending peasant dame that a neighbouring block of stone building, partially visible on the left through oak and larch plantations, was Tintajeux Manoir. Would the girl who awaited his visit there be blonde or dark? Something

Mrs. Thorne had hinted about a Spanish mother. According to all mournful human probabilities, the heiress would be swarthy ; a black-eyed, atrociously clever-looking young person, he thought, with shining hair drawn tightly from her forehead, with stiff linen collar and wristbands, with a dignified manner and inkstained fingers. Also, despite her seventeen summers, with a leaning towards stoutness.

Geoffrey disrelished the picture projected before his mental sight about as much as in his present buoyant physical state he could disrelish anything. Consulting his watch, he found with relief that he had reached the outskirts of Tintajoux five-and-twenty minutes too early. There would be time amidst this delicious wealth of atmosphere and hue that flooded him around, for a quiet smoke before encountering the terrible presence of Miss Marjorie Bartrand !

A suspicion that the heiress's peppery temper might be roused if one's jacket smelt of tobacco rather heightened the alacrity with which Geff

Arbuthnot threw himself down on the fragrant sward and produced his pipe and pouch. The pipe was a black, ferociously Bohemian-looking 'bulldog,' the pouch a delicate mass of silk embroidery and velvet. As he drew forth—alas! that I should have to say it, his strong-flavoured cavendish, Geoffrey thought, as it was his custom to think four or five times each day, of the tender friendly woman's hand that worked this pouch for him—Dinah's!

Poor Dinah! When he saw her last, an hour before, her hands were clasped together with the half apathetic gesture of a person to whom moral suffering has become a habit. A basket of coloured wools stood before her on the table, ready for her evening's cross stitching. Round the corners of her lips was the look of silent endurance which had become so painfully familiar to Geoffrey's sight. And all this for what? There was no great sin, surely, in Gaston's putting himself at once under Mrs. Thorne's easy guidance. The happiest households one hears of, thought Geoffrey, striking a

vesuvian, are those in which the broadest law of liberty obtains. Does not an artist, more than other men, want change, professionally? Dinah should know that a creator, of the cheap popularity order, as Gaston with his pleasant self-depreciation would say, must have a constant supply of straw for his brickmaking; must have material, 'stuff,' must see brisk lights, sharp shadows that the calm twilight of domestic happiness does not yield. And yet . . .

It was that constant, unspoken 'and yet' in Geoffrey's mind which, up to the present point, had rendered the close friendship of the three Arbuthnots a paradox.

Leaning back against a little thyme-grown knoll, his hands clasped behind his head, Geff looked, with eyes that had learned the secret of most common things in Nature, at the moorland weeds around him. Here were graceful quake grasses in plenty, and waving sedges, and the poet's wood-spurge, three cups in one. Close at his right hand grew a stalk of rush crowned by four or five brownish insignificant

flowers, the least lovely outwardly of all the brilliant Guernsey flora. Well, and it came to pass that the neighbourhood of these degenerate, colourless petals altered Geff's mood. He thought of the inherited mysteries and dooms of human life. He called to mind the sordid prose of the Cambridge outskirts, and the wretched men and women, forced deserters from the army of progress, who lived in them. He called to mind his own often despairing work, the struggles, hard and single handed, of his manhood, his youth. His youth—ah! and with that, the moorland scene faded. The years since he first saw Dinah spread themselves out scrollwise, suddenly illuminated, before Geff Arbuthnot's mind.

How well he remembered himself a lad of twenty! How well he remembered the hawthorn-scented evening of their first meeting! He was walking alone through the one street of Lesser Cheriton, had passed its rectory, its seven public-houses, was honestly thinking of his approaching 'Mays' and of nothing in the

world beyond, when a cottage casement window opened just above his head, and looking up he saw her unornamented, in russet gown and apron blue, a jug of water in her white hand ready for the thirsty row of mignonette and geranium slips in the window-box.

He loved her, there and then. It was an old, a sacred story now, and Geoffrey questioned no syllable of the text as he scanned it quickly through. He took her picture back with him to his dark, book-strewn scholar's attic in John's, and that night he dreamed of her. Next morning he walked forth to Lesser Cheriton at the same hour, passed the rectory, the seven public-houses, and again caught glimpses of Dinah's head as she sat, with a very fat old lady, alas! of a very humble class, in a close little parlour sewing, the lamp lighted, the windows fast shut, all the glories of the outside June night ignored.

The same kind of mute worship went on the next evening and the next. Towards the end of the week the old lady of a very humble

class accosted him. Geff could remember the thrill of that moment yet. Away through the garden gloom did he not descry the flutter of a russet dress, the outline of a girlish head downbent over a bush of opening roses? The young gentleman would pardon her for taking such a liberty, but as he seemed fond of the country he might care sometimes for a bunch of cut flowers. She was a lone widow and lived too far off to send in her garden stuff to the Cambridge market except in wall-fruit time. If she could dispose, friendly like, of a few cut flowers it would be a little profit to her. Some of the University gentlemen, she had heard, dressed up their rooms, like a show, with flowers, and the roses and carnations this term were coming on wonderful. If the young gentleman would please to walk round the garden and see?

The young gentleman walked round the garden. He bought as many flowers as his arms could carry away. He learned that the girl's name was Dinah Thurston, that she was

‘apprenticed to the dressmaking,’ and had come up all the way out of Devonshire to spend a month’s holiday with the old lady, her father’s sister. The Devonshire burr in Dinah’s speech disenchanted him no more than did an occasional lapse or two in Dinah’s grammar. When is a stripling of his age disenchanted by anything save frowns or rivals? Geoffrey held original ideas on more than one burning social subject, had made up his mind—on the first evening he saw Dinah Thurston—that it was a duty for him and for every man to marry young.

And he cared not one straw either for want of money or for plebeian birth.

Good, because healthy blood flowed in this girl’s veins, thought Geff—the incipient physiologist. Sweet temper was on her lips. A stainless woman’s soul looked forth from those fair eyes. She was above, only too much above him in every excellence, inward or external. What chance had he with his plain face, his shy student’s manner, of winning such a jewel

as Dinah Thurston's love? What hope was there that she would wait until the day, necessarily distant, when he would be able to work for a wife's support?

He became a daily caller at the cottage, and it is hard to suppose that both Dinah and Dinah's protector were quite blind to the truth. Garden stuff was ever Geff's ostensible object. He wanted cut flowers for himself, for an acquaintance who could not walk as far as Lesser Cheriton. He wanted radishes, cresses, —so different, he declared, to the stringy salad of College butteries! He wanted to know when the strawberries were likely to ripen.

He wanted some daily excuse for gazing on Dinah Thurston's face.

Hard, I repeat, to think that the feminine instinct, however unsophisticated, would make no guess, as time went on, at the state of the poor young undergraduate's heart. But this is just the kind of point at which good women, in every class, are prone to innocent casuistry. At all events, Dinah Thurston and her aunt

gave no outward sign of intelligence. The old lady took her daily shillings and sixpences with commercial gravity. Dinah cut the flowers or tied up little bunches of cress and radishes in a convenient form for Geff to carry.

So, as in a new garden of Eden without a threat of the serpent's coming, matters progressed for yet another fortnight.

Lesser Cheriton lies at a junction of rough Cambridgeshire lanes; a village girt round by blossoming orchards in May, by sheets of black water or blacker ice in December. In addition to its rectory and seven public-houses, it contains a score or two of the thatched, high-shouldered cottages common to this part of England. Being untraversed by any of the Maid's Causeways, Lesser Cheriton lies somewhat out of the ordinary undergraduate track. Geoffrey had no intimate friend in the University save Gaston Arbuthnot, whose time was quite otherwise occupied than in watching the comings and goings of his simple scholar cousin. He was known to be a hard-working man who

took his daily walk from duty and without companionship. But for an after-dinner stupidity—a turning missed—the little love drama would probably have unfolded itself with commonplace speed, and Geoffrey would have gained a wife, for I cannot think Dinah's unoccupied fancy would, at the age of eighteen, have been hard to win. The turning, however, *was* missed—thus.

Just as Geff, his hands filled with flowers, was parting from the girl, one hushed and radiant evening, there came a rush of wheels—he could hear it now, dreaming over the past on this Guernsey moorland, and the blood rose to Geff's face at the remembrance—a rush of wheels down the slumbering street of Lesser Cheriton. For a few seconds the sound was muffled by the ivied churchyard wall where the road wound abruptly. Then, at a slapping pace, trotted past a high-stepping bay, of which Gaston Arbuthnot was for the moment the possessor, also Gaston Arbuthnot, in his well-appointed cart, returning to Alma Mater, with

a brace of rich Jesus friends, after spending the afternoon at Ely.

Lesser Cheriton does not lie on the road between Ely and Cambridge. Lesser Cheriton, we may boldly say, lies on the road nowhere. But these young gentlemen were in the adventure-seeking, after-dinner mood, when a devious turning of any kind is taken with pleasant ease. And here, on their wrong road, and in Lesser Cheriton's one street, they found themselves.

There was daylight lingering still in the low fields of Cambridgeshire sky. There was a young May moon, too, whose yellowish silver caused the outlines of Dinah Thurston's head and throat to stand out in waxen relief against the dusky arbutus hedge that divided the cottage garden and the road.

Gaston Arbuthnot turned sharply round for an instant and saw her. Shouting a cheery 'Hullo!' to his cousin, he drove on, giving a little valedictory wave of his whip ere he disappeared. And Geff, the glory shorn suddenly, unaccountably from his Eden, bade

Dinah good-night, and started on his four-mile trudge back to Cambridge.

It was ten days before he again smelt the mignonette and roses of the cottage, or slaked his soul's thirst by gazing on Dinah's face. By early post next morning came a letter saying that the uncle to whose reluctantly generous hand he owed the hard all of his life lay at the point of death. The old man was sound of mind still, and desired his nephew's presence. A lawyer wrote the letter, and it was added that Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot would well consult his worldly interests by obeying the wishes of the dying man without delay.

It was one of those crises when all our present and future good seems to resolve itself into a desolate 'perhaps.' Geoffrey's debts were few. Still, he had debts. The possibility of remaining up his nine terms at Cambridge might depend upon the will of this stern-hearted uncle who, dying, craved his presence. And yet, in obeying the summons, might he not be risking dearer things than

worldly success — jeopardising hopes which already threw a trembling light over his loveless life?

He had spoken no syllable of his passion to Dinah, was too self-distrustful to tell his secret by means so matter-of-fact as a sheet of paper and the post. And so, like many another timid suitor, Geoffrey Arbuthnot elected to play a losing game. With immense fidelity in his breast, but without a word of explanation, he set off by noon of that day to London—not ignorant that Gaston's eyes and those of Dinah Thurston had already met.

A girl's vanity, if not her heart, might well have been wounded by such conduct. In after times Geoffrey Arbuthnot, musing over his lost happiness, would apply such medicine to his sore spirit as the limited pharmacopœia of disappointment can offer. If he had had a man's metal, if, instead of flying like a schoolboy, he had said to her, on that evening when Gaston drove past them at the gate, 'Take me or reject me, but choose!'—had he thus spoken,

Geoffrey used to think, he might have won her.

To-night, on the Guernsey waste-land, with heaven so broad above, with earth so friendly, the past seemed to return to him without effort of his own, and without sting. The fortnight he passed in London, the unknown relatives who beset the sick man's bed, the scene amidst a London churchyard's gloom, wherein he, Geff, in hired crape, was chief mourner, the reading of the will, the return to Cambridge—all this, at first, floated before his vision in grey monotone, as scenes will do in which one has played a spectator's rather than an actor's part. Then in a moment (Geoffrey's half-closed eyes scanning the moor's horizon, the soft airs blowing on his face) there came upon him a flash of light. It was so intolerably clear that every leaf and flower and pebble of a cottage garden in far-off Cambridgeshire stood out before him with a vividness that was poignant, a vividness that had in it the stab of sudden bodily pain.

Springing to his feet, Geoffrey resolved to

brood over the irrevocable no longer. He emptied the ashes from his pipe, then replaced it, with Dinah's delicate morsel of handiwork, in his pocket. He took out his watch. It was more than time for him to be off; and after a farewell glance at the campanula-shrouded knolls, Geff started briskly in the direction of Tintajoux Manoir. But the ghosts would not be laid. There were yet two pictures, a garden scene, an interior, upon which, whether he walked or remained still, Geoffrey Arbuthnot felt himself forced, in the spirit, to look.

The garden scene, first : time, seven of a June evening, sky and atmosphere rosy as these that surrounded him now. Thirsting to see Dinah's face, Geoffrey walked straight away from Cambridge station, he remembered, on his arrival from London. He was dusty and wearied when he drew near the village. The rectory, the seven public-houses of Lesser Cheriton, looked more blankly uninhabited than usual. Some barn-door fowls, a few shining-necked pigeons, strutted up and down the High Street,

its only occupants. When he reached the cottage no one answered his ring. The aunt was evidently absent. Dinah, thought Geoffrey, would be busy among her flowers, or might have taken her sewing to the orchard that lay at the bottom of the garden. He had been told, on some former visit, to go round, if the bell was unanswered, to a side entrance, lift the kitchen-latch, and if the door was unbolted, enter. He did so now; passed through the kitchen, burnished and neat as though it came out of a Dutch picture—through the tiny, cool-smelling dairy, and out into the large shadows of the garden beyond.

Silence met him everywhere.

The roses, only budding a fortnight ago, had now yearned into June's deep crimson. The fruit-tree leaves had grown long and greyish, forming an impenetrable screen which shut out familiar perspectives, and gave Geoffrey a sense of strangeness that he liked not. Under the south wall, where the apricots already looked like yellowing, was a turf path leading

you fieldward, through the entire length of the garden.

Along this path, with unintentionally muffled footsteps, Geoffrey Arbuthnot trod. When he reached the hedge that formed the final boundary between garden and orchard a man's voice fell on his ear. He stopped, transfixed, as one might do to whom the surgeon's verdict of 'No hope' has been delivered with cruel unexpectedness.

The voice was his cousin Gaston's.

Geoffrey had no need to advance farther. In his black clothes among the trees' thick leafage he was himself invisible, and could see by the slightest bending of his neck as much as the world in the way of personal misery had on that summer evening to display to him.

For there, at the entrance to the orchard, stood Dinah Thurston, the glow that lingers after sunset throwing up the fresh beauty of her head and figure, and there stood Gaston. They were face to face, hands holding hands, eyes looking into eyes. And even as Geoffrey

watched them his cousin bent forward and kissed Dinah Thurston's unresisting lips.

Youth, the possibility of every youthful joy, died out in that moment's anguish from Geff Arbuthnot's heart. But the stuff the man was made of showed itself. More potent than all juice of grape is pain for evoking the best and the worst from human souls. Desolate, bemocked of fate, he turned away, the door of his earthly Paradise shutting on him, walked back to the scholar's attic in John's whose full loneliness he had never realised till now, and during two hours' space gave way to such abandonment as even the bravest men know under the wrench of sudden and total loss.

During two hours' space! Then the lad gathered up his strength and faced the position. As regarded himself, the path lay plain. He must work up to the collar, hot and hard, leaving himself no time to feel the parts that were galled and wrung. But the others? At the point which all had reached, what was his, Geoffrey Arbuthnot's, duty in respect of them?

It was his duty, he thought—after a somewhat blind and confused fashion, doubtless—to stand like a brother by this woman who did not love him. Stifling every baser feeling towards Gaston, it was his duty to further, if he could, the happiness of them both. The sun should not go down on his despair. He would see his rival, would visit Dinah Thurston's lover to-night.

Gaston Arbuthnot, a man of means, which he considerably lived beyond, occupied charmingly furnished rooms in the first court of Jesus. Peacock's feathers and sunflowers had not, happily for saner England, been then invented. A human creature could profess artistic leanings, yet run no risk of being expected by his fellows to live up to a dado! Gaston's surroundings seemed rather the haphazard outcome of personal taste than the orthodox result of a full purse and adherence to the upholstery prophets. They had the negative merit of sincerity.

Walking with quick steps towards Tintajoux,

how distinctly those rose-lit Jesus rooms, the last in the series of pictures, came back upon Geoffrey's sense! He remembered an unfinished sketch in clay upon the mantelpiece; a Lilith, with languid eyes and limbs, with faultless passionless mouth, with coils of loosened hair; charms how unlike those of the demure Madonna in the cottage at Lesser Cheriton! He remembered the smell of hothouse flowers, the like of which at all seasons of the year was wont to hang about Gaston Arbuthnot's rooms; remembered a pile of yellow-backed French books on a writing table, also a framed photograph of the prettiest actress of the day exactly fronting the easy-chair in which his cousin Gaston was pleased to affirm that he 'read.'

Geoffrey Arbuthnot had to wait some minutes alone, his cousin's level, self-contained voice informing him from an inner room that he, Gaston, was dressing for the last ball of the term, given by Trinity. Would Geff not have come to that Trinity ball, by-the-by? Ah, no. Mourning, weepers. Decent respect—

cette chère Madame Grundy. And so the uncle had cut up decently! Nothing for him, of course. Kind of wretch whom uncles always would regard as belonging to the criminal classes. Had a mind to dispute the will, ruin Geoffrey as well as himself by throwing the whole thing into Chancery!

Then Gaston's airy step crossed the room to a waltz tune that he whistled. A curtain was drawn back. The two men whose future relations were to be one long paradox stood opposite each other.

Gaston Arbuthnot was in evening dress; his white cravat tied to perfection, a tiny moss rose in his button-hole; a pair of unfolded lavender gloves were in his hand. His handsome 'Bourbon' face looked its handsomest. No traces of perturbed conscience marred his gracious and débonnaire mien. A man may surely find himself deep in a flirtation with some soft-eyed village Phillis, and at the same time like to dance with as many pretty girls in his own class of life as choose to smile on him!

He advanced with outstretched hand.

‘I congratulate you, Geff.’

The uncle had left Geoffrey a sum that for the forwarding of the frugal student’s worldly ambition was more than adequate—one thousand pounds.

‘And I,’ said Geff, his ice-cold fingers returning his cousin’s grasp firmly, ‘congratulate you!’

There must have been some modulation in his voice, some look on his haggard face, that supplemented these four words, strongly.

Gaston Arbuthnot changed colour.

‘What, on Lilith?’ he asked, shifting away, and bending over his unfinished sketch. ‘It is to be good, like all my things, some day. A new block in the pavement of the road to Hades! At present this left arm, above the elbow, is, as you see, a libel on anatomy.’

Geff followed him. He rested his hand on his cousin’s shoulder with such emphasis that Gaston Arbuthnot had no choice but to look up.

‘I congratulate you,’ he repeated very low, but with a concentrated energy that infused meaning into each syllable—‘I congratulate you upon your engagement to Dinah Thurston.’

So these visions of the past stood out; not merely with rigid correctness of form, but with colour, with fragrance, with the stir of human passion, the ring of human voices, to give them vitality. By the time the last one had vanished—the rose-shaded lamps, the actress in her frame, the clay-sketched Lilith, the yellow-backed novels dissolving into the actual greys and greens of this Guernsey moorland—Geoffrey found himself ringing, with a somewhat quickened pulse, despite his indifference to every form of feminine caprice, at the front bell of Tintajoux Manoir.

CHAPTER V.

MARJORIE.

THE door was opened by a French serving-man, who bestowed on Geoffrey a bow such as valets used to copy from their masters in days when the first country in Europe possessed a manner. Had not Sylvestre made the Grand Tour with the Reverend Andros Bartrand more than half a century before the present time! He was clad in a faded livery of puce and silver, wore long white locks that in this uncertain light gave Geoffrey the notion of a pigtail and hair powder, and had a wrinkled astute face, in which official decorum and a certain thin twinkle of humour, if not of malice, contended together agreeably for precedence.

‘Monsieur demands these ladies?’—from

her earliest years, Marjorie Bartrand had received a kind of spurious chaperonage through this plural phrase of Sylvestre's. 'Will Monsieur give himself then the trouble to enter?'

The look of the old manoir was cheery ; its atmosphere was sun-warmed. And still the prospect of his approaching ordeal chilled Geoffrey's courage. The thought of standing before Miss Bartrand on approval caused him to pass a bad five minutes, as he paused in the drawing-room, whither Sylvestre had ushered him, for her coming.

Could the initial letters of his terrible pupil's character be deciphered, as one constantly hears it asserted of women, through the outward and visible presence of the house she inhabited ?

The Tintajeux drawing-room was over-vast for its height. It opened towards the south, upon the cedar-shaded lawn ; it communicated through a double row of fluted pillars with a smaller apartment towards the west. The uncarpeted floors were of oak, black from age,

fragrantly and honestly beeswaxed, as floors used to be when Sylvestre was a boy. Nothing like your grey-headed butler for keeping up Conservative habits of industry among the servants of a younger generation! Over the chimneypiece and doors were half moons, those graceful 'lunettes' of a hundred years ago, carved in bas-relief and tinted in flesh colour. The lace window draperies, looking as though they must fall to pieces at a touch, were relieved by an occasional fold of rich hued crimson silk. Venetian mirrors hung at all available points along the tarnished white and gold walls. On either side the mantelpiece were miniatures of eighteenth-century Bartrands in velvets and brocades, no prefiguring of destiny looking out from their unconcerned, half-closed patrician eyes. In the centre stood a grand buhl clock, its design a band of Cupids hurling down rose leaves on some unseen object (the guillotine, perhaps,) behind the dial.

In each of the deeply bowed windows stood a Petit Trianon gilt basket. They were full of

odorous roses, pressed close together, as cunningly set roses ought to be, and showing no green between their damask and pink and faintly yellow petals.

As Geoffrey Arbuthnot's eyes took in one after another of these details, the room seemed to him a piece of special pleading for the whole past Bartrand race. He stood here in a world that knew no better! He was amidst the shades of a generation which had heroically paid the price of its misdeeds. And the fancy, true or false, predisposed him towards the present owners of Tintajeux. They had at least, he felt, the fascination of a pathetic background. Rare charm to an imaginative man whose business has led him among the dusty tracks of our modern, low-horized English life!

Moving to a window, Geff looked forth across lawn, garden, orchard, upon as fair a sweep of sapphire as ever gladdened human eyes; for here in the heart of the Channel you got beyond the North Sea's yellowish green, and have real deep ocean blue. In the fore-

ground, so near indeed that Geff instinctively stepped back within shelter of the window's embrasure, a clerically-dressed tall man was slowly pacing to and fro on the grass. Somewhat rakishly placed on one side his head was a black velvet skull-cap. An after-dinner glow shone on Andros Bartrand's bronzed four-score-year-old face; between his lips was a cigar. A couple of excellently bred brindled terriers slunk at his heels.

‘Ho, *Œdipus*,
Why thus delay our going?’

Taking his cigar from his mouth, the Seigneur of Tintajoux recited a passage from Sophocles in the Oxford Greek accents of sixty years ago, looking about him with the leisurely physical enjoyment of the moment that was more common, probably, at the time of his own youth—a time when Göthe still walked upon the face of the earth—than it is now.

Something towering, individual, audacious, was in the old figure. Geff watched the Reverend Andros with admiration. A man so

richly vitalised that he could smoke an after-dinner cigar, declaim Greek verse for his own pleasure at eighty—a man who had so proved himself superior to the common shocks and reverses of human life—should be one worth knowing, even though his fine moral equipoise must perforce be studied in the murky and dubious atmosphere engendered by a girl's temper.

Tintajoux Manoir with its weather-bleached walls, its courtly, faded drawing-room, its half lights, its rose scents, had already laid hold of Geoffrey's imagination. The Seigneur with his antiquated Greek accent, his wise, subtly ironical old face, reciting Sophocles under this late sky, had for him a personal interest. If only the one jarring note need not be struck! If the capricious heiress were but a full-fledged graduate, a resident M.A. say, within the distant walls of St. Margaret's Hall, or of Girton!

Scarcely had the thought crossed Geff Arbuthnot's mind when he heard a door behind him open and close. Turning quickly, he saw,

to his pleasure, a child dressed in a white and red cotton frock, confined by a bright-coloured ribbon round the slim waist, and who advanced to him—a pair of brown, beautifully carved small hands, outheld.

‘You are ten minutes late, Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot.’ The faintest un-English accent was traceable in her voice. ‘But you are welcome, a thousand times over, to Tintajeux.’

Now Geff was a veritable child lover, and if this young person had only been two years younger than she looked, he would, likelier than not, have finished several of his life’s best chances by lifting her in his arms and kissing her on the spot. With a little princess of thirteen or fourteen one must be on one’s guard—for the first five minutes, at least, of acquaintance.

He took her offered hands and held them, enjoying the arch vivacity of that upturned face, brimful of sunshine as a water lily’s cup ; a face good as it was sweet.

‘Poor Cambridge B.A. Poor abashed big coach!’ thought Marjorie Bartrand. ‘The

worthy man must be used to cold receptions, I should say, on his wife's account. Now, let me set him at his ease.'

Crossing to one of the Trianon baskets she softly signed to Geoffrey to follow.

'Do you see that "Bon Espoir," Mr. Arbuthnot?' A hawk moth hovered, at the moment, with poised vibrating wings above the mass of roses. 'In Spain we have a superstition about the "Bon Espoir" when he enters a house. If he is powdered with black we say, Bad luck! If he is powdered with gold, Good! Ah,' clapping her hands, 'and our "Bon Espoir" is gold! We are to be lucky, sir, you and I, in our dealings. Now I shall tell you another Spanish saying. "To begin a friendship with a gift is a happy omen." Take this rose from me.'

And with a movement of quick grace, most artless, most unconventional, one of the finest roses in the basket was transferred by the pupil's hand to her future master's button-hole.

'Grazias, muy grazias,' said Geff, hazarding the only two words of Spanish he knew.

Marjorie clasped her hands over her ears.

‘You pronounce frightfully ill, though the words are true, Mr. Arbuthnot. Decent people say the “z” in *grazias* sharp. They say “mou-y.” Yes, sir,—and although you do teach me classics and mathematics—Spanish and French are my natural languages, and I shall always think myself free to give you a little lesson in pronunciation.’

‘Classics and mathematics!’ stammered Geoffrey Arbuthnot, reddening as the unwelcome image of Miss Bartrand was brought back to him. ‘I believed—I mean, my impression was——’

He stopped short.

‘English University manners are not good,’ thought Marjorie, shaking her head, pityingly. ‘But I like my poor B.A.—yes, just because he is shy and rugged, and has that ugly scar across his forehead. I respect him for his unpolished manner. I will call on his wife to-morrow! My impression was,’ she remarked aloud, showing such a gleam of ivory teeth in

her smile, as rendered a large and rather square mouth lovely — ‘my impression was that I advertised in the *Chronique Guernésiaise* for someone good enough to help me in my attempts at work, and that Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot offered to be that someone. I hope, sir, you do not repent you of the offer already?’

So he stood in presence of the heiress; a little country girl with sun-kissed hands, innocent of inkstains, a child’s fledgling figure, a child’s delightful boldness, and not one barley-corn’s weight of dignity in her composition. Should he, obeying first impulse, believe in her, and so incur the fate of well-snubbed predecessors? Or should he arm himself against the coquetry which this very frankness, this assumption of simplicity in dress and speech, might mask?

Long ago, in Gaston’s Cambridge rooms, Geff came across a French volume entitled, ‘The Bad Things which Men have said of Woman.’ He extracted therefrom, at more than one reading, such bitter nectar as his

scanty knowledge of the tongue allowed. Several of the maxims had slumbered in his memory. They reawakened at this moment, and bade him play the philosopher, remember at what price per hour the heiress was about to hire him, and for what work. 'Self-respect was in his keeping still,' cried half a dozen wicked old well-chosen French cynics in a breath. 'Let him retain it.'

And Geff followed his own impulse. He looked on Marjorie's unblemished child's face and believed in her—with a circumspect belief.

'One or two things, I know, want explaining.' A wave of Miss Bartrand's hand signalled to Geoffrey to take a chair. Then she seated herself opposite him, the rosy western after-glow falling directly on her clear, truth-telling face. 'You thought my advertisement bizarre, did you not?'

'On the contrary, I thought it sensible and to the point.'

Geff's answer was given with stiff courtesy.

'But too independent; for I had never

consulted my grandfather, understand ! I never spoke to the Seigneur till an hour ago, about my having a coach. Tell me, you don't think the worse of me for this ? '

Had he fallen asleep, lying among the blue-leaved campanulas on the moor, with the waving sedges at hand, with the falcon soaring high overhead ; was this drawing-room, with its mirrors and rose-scents and Cupids, a dream ? Could it be possible that Marjorie Bartrand, the heiress, who never bestowed a civil word upon any man, should plead, in sober reality, for his, Geff Arbuthnot's, good opinion ?

' I am obliged to think and act for myself. There is my defence. My grandfather, whom you will see presently, is clever—oh, cleverer than any man in Guernsey, perhaps in Spain ! Mathematics, classics—*you* even could name no branch of learning, Mr. Arbuthnot, that grand-papa has not.'

' Of that I am sure, Miss Bartrand.'

' He was known in Oxford sixty years ago. The revolution so disgusted my great grand-

father with everything French that he turned Protestant out of revenge. A mean action—say?’

‘That depends upon the manner of conversion.’

‘Well, he had come to be Seigneur of Tintajoux through the inheritance of his Guernsey wife, and to be a proper Seigneur in this country, you should be a Reverend. How great-grand-papa got to be ordained I don’t know. Andros, his son, was sent to Winchester and Oxford.’

‘The Seigneur I am about to see?’

‘Yes, and Andros became a fellow of his college. He was one of the three best classics in Oxford. But he stands right away out of my reach.’ Marjorie stretched up her slight arms as though pointing to the inaccessible mental plane occupied by the Reverend Andros. ‘He lives with the gifted people of sixty years ago. For me that is too old.’

‘Rather,’ said Geff, unable, though he would fain stand on his dignity, to repress a smile.

‘Grandpapa is an eighteenth-century man. He was just born early enough to be able to make that his boast. And he has eighteenth-century ideas. “Unless a woman be a Madame de Staël,” says the Seigneur, “let her keep silent. If she be a Madame de Staël, let her keep a thousandfold more silent.” Now I,’ cried small Marjorie, ‘mean to make my voice heard. I want to know nineteenth-century life straight through. I want to learn facts, at first hand. As a matter of lesser moment, I want a degree. Do you think London University would be beyond me?’

‘I must know first,’ answered Geoffrey, ‘to what height of learning you can reach on tip-toes.’

A flash of indignation swept over Marjorie’s face. The possibilities of temper showed round that acute, square-cut mouth of hers.

‘It is correct masculine taste to laugh at a girl’s ambition, I know! The Seigneur, Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot,—all have the same fine generosity! But why do we lose time? Perhaps,

if you will come to the schoolroom, you will look over my books, sir. It is too late, of course, to do any work to-night?'

'Not too late for me,' answered Geoffrey, in his heart liking the girl better and better. 'I came out hoping we should begin to read at once. My time is yours.'

Miss Bartrand led the way, her face held somewhat aloft, into a room plainly furnished as a study, and strewn with books and papers, on the west side of the inner drawing-room. As Geoffrey followed, every sense tempered to a keener edge than usual, he could not help remarking with what curious grace Marjorie's raven-black tresses were braided. He had been to a few, very few, London entertainments in his life, had glanced at most varieties of our current female 'heads;' none tolerable to him beside a certain recollection of soft gold worn in little waves, that way poor Dinah had with her curls, upon a Madonna forehead. But Marjorie's ebon locks, gathered high, in one thick coil, upon the summit of her head, compelled his

admiration. The style was too foreign, altogether, for English taste. And the white and red dress, the gaudy waist ribbon, were too evidently got up for effect, Geoffrey decided, now that he could draw breath, and criticise. The complexion, too, to a man who for years had had a living ideal of snow and rose-bloom before him, was certainly sallow. And those great black eyes . . .

Stopping short, Marjorie waited for her visitor on the school-room threshold. At the moment he overtook her, she turned, looked up at him. And behold ! her eyes were blue ; intensely blue as, I think, only Irish or Spanish eyes ever are ; with a sweep of jetty lash, with a hidden laughter in them, although the possibilities of temper still lurked round the corner of her lips.

‘ This is to be your torture chamber. From the time I was five I have worked myself up to my present state of ignorance at that inky desk you see, and under the rule of a long line of governesses, most of whom gave me and them-

selves up in despair. Now put me to the test, if you please, Mr. Arbuthnot. Don't spare my feelings. Treat me as you would treat 'any backward schoolboy.'

And Geff Arbuthnot obeyed the command to the letter. He did not spare her feelings.

Marjorie Bartrand's attainments were to the last degree patchy and scrappy; the typical attainments to be looked for in a quick, self-willed child, indifferently taught by a succession of teachers, and whose faulty studies had been supplemented by an avid, indiscriminate consumption of good books.

'Your classics are weak, Miss Bartrand.'

Geoffrey remarked this, pushing papers and books aside, and looking kindly across the table into his pupil's face.

'Oh! I never liked the subjects. I knew that you would say so.'

With an effort Marjorie Bartrand kept her voice under control.

'But your classics are stronger than your mathematics.'

‘Yes, Mr. Arbuthnot.’

‘You will have a great deal of work before you can bring either to—we will not say a high, but an ordinary level.’

‘Yes, Mr. Arbuthnot.’

‘You spoke of a London degree. Let us look at London matriculation first. Children are trained at high schools for about six years, I understand, for London matriculation. And many—more than a third—of the candidates fail.’

‘I spoke of London because London gives you letters after your name. The older Universities would be more thought of in Spain. I have grandpapa’s leave to go to Newnham or Girton when I am eighteen. The first of all my governesses lives in Cambridge. So I should have *one* friend there.’

‘The Girton and Newnham work is on the same level as the other colleges.’

‘And you think that work beyond my reach?’

Geff Arbuthnot thought that a girl with a

head so graceful, with eyes so blue, with soft brow gleaming under such a weight of dusky hair, might be content amidst the flower-scents and cedar shades of Tintajoux Manoir, content to let Euclid and Greek particles go—to be a woman, to accept the homely, happy paths wherein women may walk unguided by exact science, or the philosophy of all the ancients.

The opinions he knew were heterodox and not to be uttered, especially by a man who, at five shillings an hour, had engaged himself to lighten the thorny road that leads to knowledge.

‘Memory will get one through most exams., Miss Bartrand. You have a good memory?’

‘For all useless things, yes. In “Don Quixote,” for instance, you would find it hard to puzzle me. You know a little Spanish?’

‘Five words at most.’

‘How deplorable! A person who has no Spanish is not quite in possession of his faculties. If one had time to spare in these long summer days, I——’

Marjorie broke off abruptly, colouring to the roots of her hair, as she remembered the existence of her tutor's wife. A girl not ignorant of Spanish only; a girl who could just overcome the difficulties of the Prayer-book and Lessons, perhaps, or write a letter without any glaringly bad spelling, on a push.

‘If one had time to spare in these long summer days, Miss Bartrand?’

Geoffrey Arbuthnot found a pleasure it had been hard to him to account for, in her confusion.

‘I was going to say I would teach you Spanish. As if Spanish mattered! As if there were not nobler, lovelier things in life than book-learning. But that was a real Bartrand idea. We Bartrands, mouldering among our owls in this old place, cannot see daylight clear. We think too much of ourselves. Our minds are as narrow as our garden paths. I teach you Spanish, indeed! I'll tell you what I call that proposal.’ She leaned across till her sweet bud of a face was close to Geoffrey's, and

spoke with a suspension of the breath. 'I call it a bit of *devilish* Bartrand pride and stiff-neckedness.'

Geff started, with a pantomime of horror, from the adjective italicised.

'You know the meaning of Tintajoux?—Tint-à-jeu in old Norman. You English in Cornwall say Tintagel—the Devil's castle. A fit abode for us. Look at grandpapa! He quarrelled seven years ago with M. Noirmont, the rector of our next parish, over a Latin quantity. Never in this world will grandpapa speak again to that innocent old man.'

'A wrong quantity is no jesting matter,' observed Geoffrey Arbuthnot.

'Then he has three daughters, my aunts. Neither of the three has spoken to the others or to him for five-and-twenty years. No vulgar quarrel to start with. "We Bartrands wage war on a grand Napoleonic scale," says the Seigneur. "An exchange of reproachful epithets is sheer waste of brain-power." The marriage of each sister in succession wounded

the other sisters' pride. All wounded grand-papa's. It was quite simple.'

'You colour highly, Miss Bartrand.'

'I am giving you sketches from life. No colouring could be too high for showing up our Bartrand traits, the little faults of our virtues, as the French say, prettily.'

Geoffrey felt himself on the road to disenchantment. The girl might have marvellous eyes, a wealth of dusky hair, tones of liquid music, a sunburnt hand that was a poem. The heart within her was hard to the core. Linda Thorne, by hidden affinity, perhaps, was not so very far out in her judgments. Marjorie knew too much, had learned bitter lessons in human nature, not from books, but from keen reading of the men and women nearest to herself in blood.

'Yes, we think too highly of our small talents. I, with my shallowness, to propose teaching a Bachelor of Arts anything! I ought to be grateful to Mr. Arbuthnot for condescending to read with such a pupil. Now,

which three mornings in the week could you give me?’

He could give her Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. They gravely arranged their hours. They talked over the work—say, a book of Cicero, the two first books of Euclid—to be looked over before their first lesson. Then Geoffrey Arbuthnot rose to his feet. Putting on a staid and tuitional manner, he stated that his terms, in Guernsey, would be five shillings, *British currency*, per hour.

Marjorie’s face grew one hot blaze of shame.

‘Oh! of course—please do not speak of money. It is far too little. It is an honour, I mean, for me to learn, and I am coming——’

She was just about to commit herself, and so considerably simplify Geff’s position—just about to blurt out, ‘and I am coming to call upon your wife,’ when a footstep, alert, though it had paced the earth for more than eighty years, sounded on the garden path outside. The glass door of the schoolroom was pushed open, and old Andros Bartrand walked in.

CHAPTER VI.

TWO IN ARCADIA.

AN atmosphere of fresh country air, blent with tobacco smoke, surrounded him, as we like to think it surrounded Parson Adams. He saluted Geff with that nice mixture of personal reserve and general expansiveness which among a by-gone generation was called breeding. He bestowed a partial smile on Marjorie ('Those Bartrand company smiles,' as she used to bemoan, when she was a younger child. 'Counters that I must make believe are six-pences until the visit is over, until the round game melts back into our grim duel at solitaire').

'Mr. Arbuthnot, I presume? Welcome to Tintajoux, Mr. Arbuthnot.' He shook Geff's

hand with a distant affability. 'Glad always to see a man from the Alma Mater in our little island. Oxford is not the Oxford of my days, still——'

'Mr. Arbuthnot hails from : Cambridge, grandpapa,' shrieked Marjorie with energy in the Seigneur's deafer ear.

'Then, in one sense, Mr. Arbuthnot is to be congratulated, for Cambridge is nearer to Newmarket. A bitter blow to the talent that victory of Mademoiselle Ninette's in the One Thousand, last April, was it not?'

'The proverbial uncertainty of fillies retaining their form,' said Geoffrey. 'The usual reason for strong fielding. Still, the performance of Maydew in the Two Thousand was so good that the odds seemed legitimate.'

Geff Arbuthnot cared as much for horse-racing as for the native industries of Japan. But the tastes of a man of fourscore must be respected. And with a glance at the Seigneur of Tintajeux you could detect the sporting element, softened, not ungracefully, through a

course of sixty years by the learning of the scholar and the quiet life of the priest.

‘ You come over to England, of course, sir, for the big events of the year? ’

‘ Not I, not I. When you arrive at the age of a hundred you will find yourself content with newspaper reports of most human goings on, great or small. I have my books about me here, my farm, my dogs, a horse or two, and my cure of souls. Marjorie, small witch, where are you? Did you not say Mr. Arbuthnot was to take Holy Orders? ’

‘ Mr. Arbuthnot is to cure bodies, not souls. ’

Marjorie’s answer was given in a tone of *altissimo* derision.

Geff put himself through a little exercise of moral arithmetic ; the result required being the precise sum of dislike which a man of his age could feel towards a scoffing girl of seventeen, a girl with eyes like Marjorie’s, silken black hair, and exquisite hands. It was not, perhaps, so large an amount as one might have looked for.

‘An Æsculapius,’ observed the Reverend Andros. ‘You know the parable, Mr. Arbuthnot? Two stalwart men, Nature and Disease, are fighting. A third man, the Doctor, seizes his club and rushes into the *mêlée*, sometimes hitting Disease and sometimes Nature. You are to be the man with the club.’

‘I am to be the man with the club,’ answered Geff, relishing the old Seigneur’s manner. ‘As long as I confine myself to the setting of broken bones, sir, I hope to do as little harm as may be.’

‘The doctors kill us no quicker than they used,’ admitted Andros Bertrand liberally. ‘When I was an undergraduate they relied on their brains, as you do now on your finger-tips, and I believe killed us no quicker. You are an honours’ man, of course? At a hundred years old one is naturally ignorant as to the University regulations of the times. I know next to nothing of your Cambridge Triposes. You won your laurels, I assume, among bones and minerals?’

The Seigneur's prejudices were mellow and crusted as his own port. A born and passionate lover of classic literature, he regarded the admission of natural science into the Universities as a mistake, a sort of shuffle among examiners and Liberal Governments that enabled lowly-born classes of men to take high degrees.

'Unfortunately for myself, I did not,' said Geff. 'When my real college life was over, I saw bread and cheese in a remote perspective, and had to begin bones and minerals from their A B C. In my day I came out eighth,' and being exceedingly human, Geff's face flushed a bit, 'in the Classical Tripos.'

The Seigneur put his hand within the young man's arm.

'Come for a walk with me, Mr. Arbuthnot. Eighth in the Classical Tripos—eh! I will point out the limits of my vast estate to you. Marjorie, small witch, go and set ready the tea-table. Mr. Arbuthnot will spend the remainder of the evening with us.'

The daylight by now had gone into odorous dew-freshened dusk ; a big solitary planet looked down upon the woods of Tintajoux. Geff felt himself in a new world, a thousand miles removed from pale, work-a-day, prosaic England. The affluence of air and sea, the largeness of sky, took possession of him, played in his blood, evoked that precise condition of mind and body which is so often at four-and-twenty the prelude to human passion.

The talk of Andros Bartrand accorded well with the scene and moment. They spoke of men, measures, books—of books chiefly.

‘ I belong, really, to the eighteenth century,’ said the Seigneur, as, with his hand on Geff’s arm, they paced the lawn’s goodly limits. Old Andros had the vanity of his age in seeking to exaggerate it. He had been known, or so Marjorie would affirm, to speak of himself as alive at the dawn of the French Revolution. Perhaps you appreciated his real age best when you reflected that the bride of his youth might have been a contemporary of Emma Wood-

house! 'I was born before moral pulse-feeling came into fashion. This modern verse—"singing, maugrer the music"—don't please me. I never mix my wines. I like to take my verse and my philosophy separate. Hand-made paper, rough edges, vellum, constitute poetry nowadays, don't they?'

'The æsthetic fever is on us still, sir, I fear.'

'In regard to Church matters, I was middle-aged, mind, when Tract 90 decimated the country. Tractarian or Evangelical, Theist or Pantheist—the Church went on quite as profitably before parsons began calling each other by such a variety of names.'

'Names that all mean the same thing,' Geoffrey suggested, 'if men had temper enough to examine them coolly.'

'Possibly. Let me direct your attention to my young wheat. You see it in the enclosure, just between that red stable roof and the orchard. I mean to cut my wheat with the Guernsey sickle, Mr. Arbuthnot, the same pat-

tern of sickle, it is believed, that was used under Louis XI. I mean to get more for my wheat, per quarter, than any grower in England. There is the advantage of being a Channel Island farmer. One may not only be a Conservative, but, like certain great statesmen, make one's Conservatism pay.'

A resonant call from Marjorie summoned them before long to the tea-table, a meal at which old Andros with his grand-seigneur air made his guest pleasantly welcome. The dinner-hour at Tintajoux was five, the 'late dinner' of Andros Bartrand's youth. By half-past eight, in this keen Atlantic air, broiled mullet, hot potato scones, with other indigenous Guernsey dishes, were adjuncts to the tea-table which no healthily-minded person could afford to despise. Afterwards came a cigar smoked just inside the open French windows. 'At a hundred years old,' the Seigneur apologised, 'there was one thing a man might not brave with impunity, night air.' And then Geoffrey Arbuthnot prepared to take his leave.

Business-like, he reverted to pounds, shillings, and pence. It was a settled thing that he should read classics and mathematics with Miss Bartrand on three mornings of the week, at the sum (happily the darkness veiled the blushes on Marjorie's face) of six francs an hour.

‘Classics and mathematics!’ cried old Andros, assenting to the money part of the transaction with suave courtesy. ‘What will the little witch do with classics and mathematics when she has got them?’

‘Enter Newnham or Girton with them, in the first place,’ answered Marjorie unhesitatingly.

‘Newnham or Girton!’

The unfavourable summing-up of all arguments that have been put forth on the subject of woman's higher education was in Andros Bartrand's enunciation of the words.

‘Newnham and Girton send forth good men,’ remarked Geoffrey Arbuthnot. ‘In the future, sir, when the girls shall “make Greek Iambics, and the boys black-currant jams,” we

look forward confidently to seeing Girton head of the river.'

'At my age I am unmoved by new theories,' said old Andros. 'New facts I am not likely to confront. There has never yet been a great woman poet.'

'Mrs. Browning, grandpapa.'

'Nor a great woman painter.'

'Rosa Bonheur.'

'Nor a discoverer in science.'

'Mrs. Somerville.'

'Nor a solitary musical composer.'

The girl was silent.

'Yet all these fields have been as open to them as to men, have they not, witch?'

Marjorie Bartrand had passed into the garden. She stood impatiently tapping a slender foot on the turf and looking up, her arms folded, an expression on her face curiously like that of old Andros, at a strip of crescent moon, that showed between the cedar branches.

'A new moon. I curtsey to her, twice, thrice, and I wish a wish!'

‘Did you hear my question, witch? In poetry, art, music, have women not had just as ample chances as men?’

‘Spanish women have had no chances at all,’ cried Marjorie, raising her tone, as she adroitly shifted her ground, after the manner of her sex. ‘For their sake I mean to work—yes, to get to the level of a B.A., grandpapa, in spite of your most withering contempt.’

‘For the sake of Spain, benighted Spain!’ remarked the Seigneur genially. ‘My granddaughter’s blood is half Spanish, Mr. Arbuthnot. I had a son once—an only son——’ Could it really be that Andros Bartrand’s firm voice for a second faltered? ‘When he was no longer a young man he went to Cadiz, for health’s sake, and married, poor fellow, a Spanish girl who died at the end of the year. Marjorie has stayed a few times among her mother’s family, and has gone Spain-crazed, as you will soon find out for yourself.’

‘Crazed!’ rang Marjorie’s tuneful voice through the night. ‘I want to hold my hands

out to my own people, yes, to teach, if I ever know anything myself, among the girls of our poor benighted Spain. And I am proud of my craziness. I thank you for the word, grand-papa. It is the prettiest compliment.'

The complexion of the family talk was threatening; Geoffrey Arbuthnot hastened his adieux. But Andros had still a farewell shot to discharge against the little witch.

'Our poor benighted Spain is the one country in Europe with a decent peasantry of its own. Get Mr. Arbuthnot, get anyone who understands the matter, to talk to you about the English ploughman, and compare the two pictures. The Spanish peasant's wife sews, knits, embroiders, reads her Mass-book and can cook a capital stew. Her drink is water. Infanticide is unknown. The men are hospitable, courteous, dignified. Among benighted people like these, Marjorie Bartrand proposes to preach the benefits of a liberal pauper education as exhibited in England.'

By the time the Seigneur's ironies came to

an end Marjorie's small figure had vanished among the deepening shadows of the lawn. Fearful of losing sight of her altogether—for, indeed, Marjorie Bartrand was suggestive of something weird, sprite-like, and of a nature to take other form at an hour when owls do fly—Geff bade his host a hasty good-night and followed.

The girl herself was invisible, but a clear childish voice chanted the old ditty of Roland somewhere in the neighbourhood, 'Like steel among weapons, like wax among women.' Or, as Marjorie sang with spirit :

'Fuerte qual azero entre armas,
Y qual cera entre las damas.'

'I have found my gardening scissors, Mr. Arbuthnot,' she cried, emerging through the schoolroom window, a basket on her arm. 'Flowers smell sweetest that are cut with the dew on them. I mean to cut some roses and cherry-pie for—for——'

'Your wife,' was on Marjorie's lips, but she

stopped herself abruptly, all Cassandra Tighe's warnings about Geoffrey's domestic embarrassments coming back to her.

'Let me help you,' said Geoffrey. A minute later Marjorie, on tiptoe, was vainly endeavouring to catch a bough of swaying yellow briar. 'You are just one foot too short to reach those roses, Miss Bartrand.'

Marjorie sprang up in air. She plunged with bold final grasp among the thorns, and succeeded in getting scratches destined to mark her right hand for some weeks to come; scratches that might, perhaps, recall this moment to both of them in the pauses of some tough mathematical problem, some arid point in Latin grammar or Greek delectus.

'The result of over-vaulting ambition.' Thus from his calm altitude of six-foot-one, Geff moralised. 'How many roses am I to pick?'

'You are to pick three beauties!' said Marjorie, somewhat crestfallen. 'Won't you have the scissors? These briars prick cruelly.'

But Geff wanted no scissors; his skin, so

he told her, was of about the same texture as a stout dog-skin glove. When the briar-roses were duly laid in Marjorie's basket he put on the grave manner of his profession. It was his duty as a surgeon to make immediate inspection of her injuries.

'You are losing a good deal of blood, Miss Bartrand.' Taking both her hands, he held them up, in the streak of moonlight, not very distant from his lips. 'But while there is life there is hope. Three, four, deep wounds! For my sake, don't faint, if you can help it.'

'Faint!' Marjorie's laugh was a thing good to hear; a thing fresh as the chatter of birds in April, pungent as the smell of new-turned earth. 'I wonder whether any of the old Bartrands ever fainted. I mean, *before* they were guillotined! Confess, we are queer specimens, grandpapa and I, are we not, sir?' Asking Geff this question, she left her hands in his simply until he should choose to let them go. The first ineffable coldness of girlhood

was on her. She knew no more of passion than did her own roses. 'Not very pleasant people to live with,—say! in an out-of-the-way Guernsey manoir.'

'So much must depend on the taste of him who survived the ordeal.' Geoffrey Arbuthnot quietly surrendered the slim hands resting unresponsively in his. 'At the present moment life in an out-of-the-way Guernsey manoir seems to me—endurable.'

A stronger word was very near escaping Geoffrey Arbuthnot's lips.

'You are taken in by our picturesqueness,' said Marjorie with decision. 'England must be an astonishingly ugly country, judging from the effect our bit of Channel rock appears to make upon English people. Now, to me, who have seen Spain, it is all so cramped, so seaweedy. Look away to the left there—sea. To the right—sea. Move a little step nearer—close here, don't be afraid, and look where I point across the moor—sea again. Let an out-and-out big wave come some day, and the

whole nation would be submerged, like Victor Hugo's hero.'

The glimpse of silver-grey tranquil moor brought back before Geoffrey the thyme-grown bank, the falcon high poised, the tuft of wood-rush—associated with the last rose visions of the squalid Barnwell pavements, of the men and women, forced deserters from the army of progress, who dragged out their span of human existence there.

'I should like to know what you are thinking about,' Marjorie asked, noting with a child's acumen the changed expression of his face.

'I am thinking about England, about the hard battles some English men and women have to go through with. A night like this,' said Geff, 'brings sharp thoughts before one of one's own life, one's own uselessness.'

In an instant Marjorie was softened. Tears almost rushed to her eyes. Her thoughts, true to her better self, followed Geoffrey's as if by instinct. Then the good impulse passed. It entered her wilful head that this excellent

young gentleman from Cambridge meant to sermonise her. She resolved to shock him.

‘I used to feel goody-goody myself, very long ago. You would not believe it now, but as a child I was pious.’

‘I believe it thoroughly,’ answered Geff, grave of countenance.

‘When I wanted my lettuce-seed to come up, I would perform little acts of propitiatory contrition to Pouchée, the poor old Pouchée who lives in Cambridge now. When grandpapa went out shooting I carried his game-bag, and used to offer fervent prayers, whenever the dogs came to a point, that he might kill his bird. Facts undermined my faith. Sometimes the point was false. Sometimes grandpapa missed his aim. Chaffinches and slugs ate my lettuce-seed. I turned infidel. I have remained one. Grandpapa says I have the hardest flint soul in, or out of, Christendom. Still, that is one Bartrand judging of another.’

‘I am not a Bartrand,’ remarked Geff Arbuthnot. ‘I do not think you have a hard

flint soul. You believe in wishes addressed to a strip of new moon, for instance ? ’

They were standing at the highest point of Tintajeux ; a small plateau, the approach to which was fashioned on the exploded system of puzzle or maze. Long before Marjorie’s lifetime this plateau—who shall say on what morning of youthful human hope—had been christened Arcadia ! The country-folk around Tintajeux called it Arcadia still. Cool draughts of air were stirring from the moorland. They brought fragrance of distant hayfields, honeyed whiffs of the syringa hedges that formed the maze. Would Marjorie ever curtsy to future moons without the scent of hay, the over-sweetness of blown syringa returning on her senses ?

‘Some day,’ observed Geff, as she maintained a caustic silence, ‘I mean you to tell me what you wished for, a quarter of an hour ago, under the cedars.’

Marjorie Bartrand turned from him, the determination of a long lineage of dead, high-tempered Bartrands on her face. To command,

implied or spoken, had she never yet bowed, during her seventeen years of life, without asking the reason why.

She asked nothing now. Her cheeks—happily, the starlight betrayed no secrets—were glowing damask. For the girl knew, deep in her fiery heart, what the wish was; a wish by no means unconnected with her feelings towards Geoffrey Arbuthnot.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE BRINK OF A FLIRTATION.

MEANWHILE the solstice night grew at each instant more purple, more mysterious. Geff felt himself in love with midsummer starlight, with Guernsey, with Tintajeux. Marjorie he would fain have engaged for a game of hide-and-seek among the neighbouring orchards, or of follow-my-leader along the beach, white in the crescent moon's shining. For what was this poor small heiress but a child, with a child's cold, sweet, unopened heart, a child's quick temper, a child's readiness for play, in whatever shape play might happen to be offered her!

‘You will not tell me your wish, to-night, Miss Bartrand. Never mind. You will tell it

me some day. To show you I bear no malice, you shall hear mine. My present wish, as I *must* leave Tintajoux, is to return to Miller's Hotel by the longest road possible. You could point it out to me.'

'I should rather think so!' cried Marjorie brusquely. 'If you don't mind a quarter of an hour's nice hard scramble, your plan is to go up the Gros Nez cliffs, about a mile from this, and so back to your hotel along the edge of the steep. You are tolerably steady on the legs, I suppose?'

Tolerably! A too shallow purse, a too well endowed brain had combined to force Geoffrey Arbuthnot out of the ranks of the big and world-renowned athletes. But ask the All England football team, ask the men against whom the All England football team has played, if Arbuthnot of John's be tolerably steady on his legs.

'I don't know that I am unusually feeble, Miss Bartrand. My weakness, perhaps, is more of the nerves than the limbs. Point out some

path to me that you and the Seigneur are in the habit of treading, assure me, on your honour, that you think that path safe, and perhaps I shall have courage to attempt it.'

'Well, when you get free of Tintajeux you must go straight across the corner of the moor to Les Hüets. At the end of a few hundred yards you will find four water-lanes meet. You must take the one that seems to lead away from Petersport and follow it until you get to Tibot. You know Tibot, of course?'

'I am shamefully ignorant, Miss Bartrand. I do not know Tibot.'

'After that, a brisk 'two minutes' down, down, through spongy wet earth churning at every step over your ankles, brings you to the shore. Right in face of you are the Gros Nez heights, and if you get to the top all right (even in broad day it is not considered a very safe climb for strangers), your road home will lie straight before you, along the edge of the cliffs.'

Geff Arbuthnot clasped his forehead.

‘When I get clear of Tintajeux I must go across the moor to an unpronounceable place where four water-lanes meet. Of these I must choose the one that looks least likely to lead anywhere. Then down, down, through spongy wet earth churning up to my ankles at every step, until I catch sight of the cliffs where I shall finally break my neck. Miss Bartrand, will you allow me to ask a favour?’

‘Doubtless.’ A gleam of white teeth showed the heartiness of the girl’s amusement. ‘It rests with me, though,’ she added maliciously, ‘to say “yes” or “no” to it.’

‘Unfortunately it rests always with feminine caprice to say “yes” or “no” to the proposals made by men.’

The hour, or the moonlight, or some curiously occult and unknown influence must have been telling on Arbuthnot of John’s. He stood on the brink of a flirtation.

‘As you may have proved to your cost, sir,’ thought Marjorie, not quite without a movement of pity. ‘As you may have proved in

that hour—I wonder how many years ago—when the Devonshire peasant girl decided on becoming Mrs. Geoffrey Arbuthnot.'

'And my proposal is that you come with me, at least as far as the unpronounceable meeting of the water-lanes; start me on my downward spongy way to the sea, and then, unless I descend too quickly from the Gros Nez cliffs, I shall have a fair chance of finding my road home.'

To an agonised wife! It might be—so mixed is human happiness, thought Marjorie ironically—to the least little domestic lecture on the subject of late hours.

'Feminine caprice,' she observed gravely, 'is in your favour for once, Mr. Arbuthnot. I will look after your interests as far as Tibot. After that, your fate will be in your own hands. On the outside chance of your getting back alive to your hotel, I may as well present you with some rather better flowers.'

She flitted about, moth-fashion, from one garden-plot to another, ever rifling the choicest

and sweetest bloom of each for her basket. Afterwards, the lodge gates passed, she accompanied Geoffrey across a strip of common land and down a few hundred yards of darksome lane to the Hüets, from which point the trickle of a little moorland stream guided them to Tibot. Here, emerging into such light as the young moon yielded, the moment came for bidding good-night. And here an exceedingly delicate question in social tactics presented itself with force to Marjorie's attention. What decorous but strictly indirect message ought to accompany her gift of flowers to Geoffrey Arbuthnot's wife?

‘You don't mind carrying things, I hope, sir, as long as they are not from the butcher's, or done up in a brown paper parcel? Guernsey is not Cambridge, you know. Grandpapa and I carry everything on the end of our walking stick, from a conger eel downwards.’

‘I will carry a conger eel for you, any day, with delight,’ said Geoffrey.

‘I shall remember that speech. I shall

present you with a conger eel four feet long, in the market, and watch to see you carry him to your hotel. To-night I only want you to take these flowers for me to—to some one in the town,' observed Marjorie, with staid composure.

But she was in no courageous mood, really. She listened as though she would ask counsel of it to the familiar little black-veined moor stream, eddying away with chill, clear voice to the sea.

'You have only to command me,' said Geoffrey, with an absurd, a reasonless sense of personal disappointment, 'and I obey. The address of your friend is——'

'You will have no difficulty about the address. Indeed, I am afraid,' stammered Marjorie, 'that at present, for another few days, I have scarcely a right to speak of the person as my friend. The difficulty is, sir, how will you carry the flowers? In your hands, you say! A man who would climb Gros Nez cliffs must pretty nearly hang on by his eyelashes, like the heroes in Jules Verne's stories; at times he

wants as firm a grip, I can tell you, as all his ten fingers can give.'

'If I surmount these terrific perils, if I reach Petersport safely, your flowers will share my fate. Don't be anxious about them, Miss Bartrand.'

Marjorie paused, her face set and thoughtful. After a minute or two, with the unconsciousness of self, the ignorance of possible misconstruction which rendered her actions so absolutely the actions of a child, she unloosened her waist ribbon. A length of twine lay in her basket. With this she bound the flower stalks firmly together, then knotting her ribbon, she attached it in a long loop to the bouquet.

'Before setting foot on the cliffs you must pass the loop round your neck—so.' For Geff's better guidance she pantomimed her instructions round her own girlish throat. 'By that contrivance you leave your hands free. And you must take care of my ribbon if you please, sir, and bring it back next lesson. It is a bit of real Spanish peasant ribbon one of my

cousins bought for me in Cadiz. A thing not to be replaced in these parts of the world. Good-night, Mr. Arbuthnot.'

'You have not said half enough. You have not even told me whom your flowers are for.'

'My flowers are for a person I hope, before long, to know and like well.'

'The description is tantalising. It would scarcely furnish me, I fear, with the one name and address of the person wanted, among all the narrow, twisting streets of Petersport.'

'The flowers are, Mr. Arbuthnot, cannot you guess—for whom they are meant?'

'I am ill at originating ideas, Miss Bartrand. I can guess nothing.'

'Because you cannot, or will not, which?'

'Because I cannot, because I am blankly unimaginative.'

For a few moments Marjorie stood masterfully inactive. Then she flew discreetly back into the shadow of the lane. On a slightly rising mound she stopped. What light there was touched the upper half of her face, and Geoffrey

could see her eyes. He knew that her mood, for Marjorie Bartrand, was a softened one.

‘The flowers are for yourself, Mr. Arbuthnot,’ so her voice rang through the sea-scented night. ‘For your better self, you understand. Don’t lose my ribbon, and, if you can help it, don’t fall over the Gros Nez cliffs. Good-night.’

And with a wave of her hand—though he was blankly unimaginative, Geoffrey believed it might be with a wafted kiss from her finger tips—she disappeared.

Geff Arbuthnot’s first experience in snubbing had come to an end.

Pondering over many things, most of all over the cruelties and caprices of youthful woman, he ran lightly down the ankle-deep water-lane, then across a miniature bay of argent, shell-strewn sands, to the base of Gros Nez cliffs. The ridge rose sheer above his head, a dark wall of over a hundred and fifty feet, polished as glass to the limit of the breakers, but, above that line, fissured, lichened, rough.

Miss Bartrand's sarcasm had not exaggerated the gravity of the ascent. The man who in an uncertain light should successfully scale Gros Nez must have not only his hands and feet but his wits thoroughly under command.

And here the loop of ribbon attached to Marjorie's flowers proved of great use.

I have tried to represent in Geoffrey a man little moved by the nicer shades of cultivated or hothouse feeling, a man more likely to be wrapped up in one grim fact of the mortuary or dissecting-room than in all the pretty uncertainties of sentiment put together. But to-night a change had certainly passed over him. Before beginning his climb he found a delicate pleasure in suspending Marjorie's bouquet, exactly in the mode her fingers had taught him, round his neck. He found a pleasure—the cliff's dizzy height hardly won—in unknotting her ribbon, smoothing it out from its creases with a hand unversed in millinery tasks, finally in hiding it away, jealously, in the breast-pocket of his jacket.

Concerning this jealousy he asked himself neither why nor wherefore. In transitional moments like these an old tender image fading even as a new one rises above the horizon, few of us in our inmost thoughts care to be motive-seekers. Geoffrey knew that he would not for an empire have let Dinah see that ribbon to-night, or any other night. He knew that between him and the little girl with carved sweet lips and ebon hair there existed a secret. He knew that tutoring was a far pleasanter business than he had bargained for, also that the flowers Marjorie had given him, and which he carried in his hand, smelt of Tintajoux.

But he took out his embroidered tobacco pouch, his short black briar, notwithstanding. He smoked his cavendish vigorously as he trudged back to Petersport. Arbuthnot of John's might stand on the brink of a flirtation. He was not as yet in a state that need occasion a man's staunchest bachelor friends anxiety.

CHAPTER VIII.

CROSS-STITCH.

DINAH was still busied over her embroidery frame when Geoffrey's entrance brought the coolness of the night, the wholesome odour of heliotropes and roses, into the chronically dinner-oppressed atmosphere of Miller's Hotel.

Her blonde youthful face looked weary. The lightless, faraway expression, which you may always observe as a result of unshed tears, was in the glance she lifted to Geff.

‘What, you are up still! Do you know that it is past eleven, Mrs. Arbuthnot?’

Four years ago, when Geoffrey first saw Gaston and Dinah in the bloom of wedded happiness not two months old, it was decreed by Gaston, least jealous of men, that his wife

and cousin should call each other by their Christian names.

Upon Dinah's joyous lips Geoffrey, without an effort, became at once a familiar household word—dear good old Geff, through whom, obliquely, her introduction to the husband she passionately loved had come about!

But Geoffrey, after a few stammering, painful efforts, abandoned the calling of Dinah by her Christian name for ever.

He could and did call her so, to Gaston only. He intended to stand by her heroically, absent, or in her presence; intended, God helping him, to be the good brotherly influence of her life and of her husband's. Looking upon the eyes that met his with such cruel self-possession, upon the lips which he had once madly coveted to press, Geoffrey Arbuthnot realised that he could never feel towards Dinah as a brother feels. He resolved that his speech, knowingly, should not play traitor to his heart. Gaston's wife must, for him, be coldly, stiffly, conventionally, 'Mrs. Arbuthnot,' until his life's end.

‘Yes, I am up still, Geff. There’s no chance of seeing Gaston till long past midnight. A lady like Mrs. Thorne, accustomed to India and Indian military society,’ said Dinah, ‘would be sure to keep late hours. So I thought I would shade my poppies straight through. I must wait for daylight to put in the pinks and scarlets.’

Crossing to the table where Dinah was laboriously stitching, Geoffrey seated himself at her side. He looked attentively down at her work with those acute, deep-browed grey eyes of his. •

‘Your embroidery is very—’ he was about to say ‘beautiful,’ but checked himself. The star-strewn night, the hay-scents along the cliffs, the roses of Tintajoux were in his soul, lifting it above sympathy with poor Dinah’s wool-work. ‘Your embroidery is very delicate and smooth,’ he went on truthfully. ‘And how quick you are about it! You only began the top yellow rose when I stayed with you and Gaston, I recollect, last Easter.’

Dinah's pieces of work were on a scale that carried one back to the female industry of the Middle Ages, yet was their ultimate use nebulous. Vast ottomans, vast cushions, yards of curtain border, imply a mansion. And the Arbuthnot's mansion at present existed not. But on what else should a childless woman, cut off from household duties, not over fond of books, forlornly destitute of acquaintance, and with an ever absent husband, employ herself?

Once, long ago, the poor girl made Gaston a set of shirts, as a birthday surprise. These shirts were lovingly, exquisitely stitched, as Dinah Thurston had been taught to stitch in her childhood. They were also a consummate failure. As a monument of patience, he observed, they were beyond praise. As a fit—'Well,' said Gaston, kissing her cheek in careless gratitude, 'it is not a case of Eureka.'

He never wore them, never knew on what day, in what manner, his wife, fired by sharp disappointment, got them out of existence. Simply, the shirts did not adjust themselves

well round his, Gaston Arbuthnot's, shapely throat. It was not a case of Eureka. The subject interested him no further.

Plain sewing for grown men and women, Dinah promptly decided, was fruitless labour. Of dressmaking proper, Gaston would never (excusably, perhaps) suffer a trace in his rooms. And so, the sweet fashioning of tiny children's clothes not belonging to her lot, Dinah Arbuthnot it would seem had no choice, no refuge on the planet she inhabited, but cross-stitch.

At moments of more than common loneliness she would feel that her life was being recorded—mournfully, for a life of two-and-twenty—in these large and not artistic embroideries. It seemed as though she stitched with a double thread, as though a dull strand of autobiography for ever intertwined itself among the flaunting roses, the impossible auriculas and poppies that grew beneath her hands.

The piece at which she now worked was

begun in London, at a time when Gaston used to dine out regularly every night of his life, and when his days, from various art callings, were, perforce, spent apart from her. As Geoffrey spoke, she could see her St. John's Wood lodging, her afternoon walks in the Regent's Park, worked gloomily in with every shade of those topmost yellow roses. After London came a short stay at Weymouth. Here Gaston had a 'convict study' to make, on order, and with his usual good luck, discovered he knew several capital fellows in the regiment quartered at Portland. The capital fellows naturally delighted in having the versatile artist at mess, and Dinah passed almost as many lonely evenings as she had done in London. It was in Weymouth, she remembered, that her auriculas, her impossible auriculas, began to take colour and shape. And now, in Guernsey . . .

The heavy drops gathered in Dinah Arbuthnot's eyes; pushing her work frame away, she turned to Geoffrey. The lamp shone on her

full. The delicate outlines of her cheek and throat stood out before him in startling whiteness.

‘And so you have come back from your coaching, Geff.’ Her tone was quiet. Long practice had taught Dinah to repress that sound detested by Gaston—as by all husbands—tears in the voice. ‘How do you like the sensation of being snubbed by an heiress?’

‘Pretty well, I thank you,’ said Geff. ‘Snubbing, as you know, Mrs. Arbuthnot, is a sensation I got used to in my youth.’

‘Was the heiress very bad? Did she make you feel miserably uncomfortable?’

‘No, I cannot go so far as that. I cannot say that I felt miserably uncomfortable.’

‘But you don’t care for her? If you keep the work on, it will not be for pleasure?’

Dinah’s heart was fuller than it could hold with love for her husband. Geoffrey was nothing to her, except the best friend that she and Gaston possessed. Yet she asked this question quickly, with interest. In her secret

consciousness, it was an accepted fear, perhaps, though Dinah knew it not, that Geoffrey would never care, as men care who mean to marry, for any girl.

‘Work that is to be decently done must always be done for pleasure.’

It was Geff Arbuthnot who uttered the aphorism.

‘And your evening, snubbing and all, has been passed pleasantly?’

‘I have breathed ampler air,’ Geoffrey made evasive apology, man-like. ‘I have seen more blue sea and sky than ever in my life before. Miss Bartrand’s snubbing was—not beyond my strength. The Seigneur of Tintajoux is a specimen of the old scholarly, high-and-dry parson, worth walking any number of Guernsey miles to see. Some day, Mrs. Arbuthnot, I shall take you with me to Tintajoux.’

‘To come in for my share of snubbing, too?’

Dinah asked the question, faintly colouring.

‘Marjorie is a frank, generous-hearted child. You cannot think of her in the light of a grown-up woman. She is a Bartrand, with the faults and virtues of her inheritance, the faults—pride and temper—visibly on the surface. I am very sure,’ added Geff, bending his head, as though to examine the intricate shading of Dinah’s poppies, ‘that you and Marjorie Bartrand might be fast friends, if you chose.’

‘I have no friends,’ said Dinah, ‘except my own people, down home,’ of whom, in truth, Gaston allowed her to see little enough, ‘and—and you, Geff.’

The voice was unfaltering, the full good mouth was steady. Dinah made the admission, not as a matter of complaint, but of fact, and Geoffrey’s heart fired.

‘That “friendlessness” is the one huge mistake of your life,’ he exclaimed. ‘Gaston is not selfish, would not be selfish, unless your unselfishness forced him into being so. You should never have allowed this morbid love of solitude to grow on you. You ought to assert yourself,

to go into the world at Gaston's side, whether you like it or not.'

'I should not like it now. When I was a girl, when we first married, my heart was light, against what it is now. It was the end of the London season, you remember. No, I don't suppose you do?'

Does he not, though—that late July time when, after seeing the marriage ceremony over, he went back to his scholar's attic in John's; that Long Vacation when the skies were brazen to him, when day and night alike were one feverish pain!

'It was the end of the London season, and when Gaston took me to the Opera and twice down to dinner at Richmond, I did feel,' confessed Dinah with humility, 'that I had it in me to be fond of junketing,—oh, Geff, there's one of my country words! luckily Gaston can't hear it—of pleasure, I mean, and society. But the taste has died.' Of what lingering, cruel death, who should know better than Geoffrey! 'Ladies of my husband's class have not called upon me.

I have neither rank, talent, nor a million. Without these, Gaston says, no woman can make her way in the English world.'

Hot words were ready to rush from Geoffrey's lips, but he kept them back. To remain on equal terms with husband and wife in this strange triangular friendship, did sorely tax his powers of self-repression, at times.

'Gaston would rejoice in knowing that your life was cheerfuller, no matter how the cheerfulness was brought about. He has told me so, often. Now, here, in Guernsey, eight sea-going hours removed,' said Geff, lightly, 'from English Philistinism, what should hinder you from joining in any little bit of "junketing" that may offer itself?'

'The hindrance of having no introduction to the Guernsey ladies.'

'Mrs. Thorne has called on you.'

'On Gaston. He is dining with them now. He will dine with them four evenings a week. Yes,' Dinah's voice fell, 'I know, at a glance, the kind of clever person who will amuse my

husband. Mrs. Thorne is one of them. She is magnetic.'

'With the magnetism that repels rather than attracts,' remarked Geff.

'That is your feeling about her. You and Gaston would be safe not to admire the same woman.'

Geoffrey Arbuthnot was mute. Although his face was too sunburnt to admit of visible deepening in hue, it may be that just then Geoffrey Arbuthnot blushed.

'You have no change in your character. You could be content (a happy thing for your wife, whenever Mrs. Geoffrey appears on the scene) with one mood, one voice, one face, day after day, before you for forty years. Is not that true?'

'I am not an artist,' said Geff, after a pause. 'For a humdrum man, prosaically occupied, the one face, Mrs. Arbuthnot, the one voice,'—ah, fool that he was! his own voice trembled—'might constitute as much happiness as we are likely to taste, any of us, this side death.'

‘And Gaston is an artist in every fibre.’ Poor Dinah’s estimate of Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot was invariably Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot’s, except that she believed in him a vast deal more than he believed in himself. ‘I ought to know that my dull days, my silent evenings, are matters of course. It is not Gaston’s fault that he can only get inspiration through change. Some day, when the world is bowing down before a really great work of his, my hour of triumph will come. Who knows, Geff, if Gaston had married in his own class, if he and his wife had led just the usual life of people in society—it may be his genius would not have fared so well!’

Dinah never looked more perilously lovely than when, with flushed cheeks and kindling eyes, she spoke aloud of her ambitions for her husband. The poor girl’s whole life lay in her one, passionate, oft-bruised affection. More than common beauty, a look of divine, all-hoping, all-forgiving love, shone on her face at this instant.

Geff Arbuthnot recollected it wanted only ten seconds to midnight, and that he must fly. Had not long habit trained him to recognise the moment when flight was his surest, his only wisdom !

‘ You and Gaston understand each other, as no third person can hope to do, Mrs. Arbuthnot. I consider you the two happiest mortals alive, though perhaps you do not know the extent of your own happiness.’

‘ And you are off to your pillow, to dream of the heiress who has not snubbed you,’ said Dinah, as he moved from her side. ‘ Why, Geff ! ’ For the first time she caught sight of the bouquet, somewhat cunningly held in shadow, hitherto. ‘ What roses, what jasmynes, what heliotropes ! ’ I have been wondering all this time what made the room so sweet.’

And speaking thus, she stretched forth her hand for Marjorie Bartrand’s flowers.

During nearly four years, a portentously large slice of life under five-and-twenty, it had

been one long case of give-and-take between Geoffrey and Dinah, the 'take' invariably on Dinah's side. She took his heart from him to start with. She took the happiness out of his youth. Silently, unrecognised, Geoffrey constituted himself her knight-errant in the hour of his own sharpest pain. (Till her death Dinah could never know the part played by Geoffrey at the time of her engagement and marriage.) In a hundred ways he had since steadied her husband in the path of right. By a hundred unselfish actions he had smoothed nascent domestic discontents, any one of which might have worked mortal havoc with Dinah's peace.

She had received all his devotion—a prevalent weakness, it is to be feared, among gentle, unimaginative women of her type—as the simplest thing in the world!

If Dinah, as once there was promise, had had children, doubt not that her moral nature must have widened. But this was not to be. A tiny, dying creature held between weak arms

for half a day; some yellowing, never-used baby-clothes, jealously hidden out of Gaston's sight; a kiss stolen, when her husband was not by to see, from any fair cottage babe she might chance to come across in her walk—this much, and no more, was Dinah to know of motherhood.

And the love blindly centred on Gaston had in it an element which, although the word is hard, must in justice be called selfishness.

‘Nothing Gaston likes so well as the smell of flowers on his breakfast table.’ And Dinah still carelessly held out her hand in a receptive attitude. ‘He says his brain must be like the brains of dogs or deer—smell colours all his thoughts. You will see, Geff! Those heliotropes and roses will just set him kneading some new idea into clay to-morrow morning.’

But the heliotropes and the roses did not quit Geoffrey's hand.

In this moment, ay, while Dinah was speaking, a current of new, keen, healthful life had swept through him. He felt more thoroughly

master of himself than he had done since that May evening when he first blindly surrendered his will, with his heart, to a blonde girl watering flowers through a casement window at Lesser Cheriton. Marjorie's roses, fresh from her pure touch, a friendly gift from the world-scorning child who, somehow, looked upon her tutor as out of the scope of scorn, were his. If Gaston needed inspiration from flower-scents, Doctor Thorne's garden, any other garden than that of the Seigneur of Tintajoux, must supply the inspiration.

He made a dexterous exit, rushed away, boy-fashion, light of spirit, three steps at a time, to his own room. And before half a minute was over Dinah Arbuthnot had forgotten him. Poor old faithful Geff, his lesson-giving, his heiress, his bouquet—what were these, nay, what were the alien concerns of the universe to a pathetically tender soul, quick smarting under its own immediate and narrow pain !

Had Linda Thorne the power of holding an artist's restless fancy captive, the genius of

The country districts hold scanty intercourse with the townsfolk.

At the time I write of, the remote little peninsula of Tintajeux was probably the most exclusive parish in the island.

‘While we were on terms with the Rector of Noirmont we had four people in our set,’ Marjorie would say. ‘The Rector of Noirmont, his wife, the Seigneur of Tintajeux, Marjorie Bartrand. Since grandpapa and M. Noirmont had their big Latin fight we have split up into further faction. Our set consists of the Seigneur of Tintajeux and Marjorie Bartrand. We are a nation of two.’

Of the things done and left undone by the Petersport inhabitants, this nation of two was oftentimes as ignorant as though some dark continent divided them. The dances, picnics, military bands, garden parties, and general gossip of urban life, concerned the Bartrands languidly. Old Andros had his farming, his dogs, his classic authors, and a curiously mixed performance which he called parochial work,

to occupy him. Marjorie had her study, a boat, fishing-tackle, gardening tools ; in days not so very far distant, had a carpenter's bench ; all the wholesome outdoor interests of a country-nurtured child. If Cassandra Tighe chanced occasionally to rattle round in her village cart and communicate to them the last town news, they heard it : rarely, otherwise.

It thus happened, Cassandra remaining away with her nets and her sea-monsters in Sark, that the comedy in course of rehearsal between Geff and Marjorie went on for several days without interruption. The master and pupil met seldom, save during the hours of work, when Geff, professionally severe, discouraged idle conversation. It did not become easier to Marjorie than it had seemed on the first night of their acquaintance to say the words, *Your wife*. The terms on which they met were frank ; slightly stiffer, perhaps, under the broad sun of noon than they had been among the syringa blossoms by starlight ! They stood, on the outside, at least, in the

position of any commonly dense freshman, and of a coach, conscientiously minded to get his man, if possible, through Previous.

On the outside. Growing to know Marjorie's transparent nature better and better, deriving keen refreshment from the badly-trained, fine intelligence which might have risen so high above the commonly dense freshman's level, Geoffrey grew, hourly, more sensible that their seasons for meeting were 'ower lang o' comin', that each intervening day was a space of time to be lived through! At this point stood Geff. Secure, she was fain to think contented, in the knowledge of a Mrs. Arbuthnot's existence, Marjorie worked with an unstinted zeal, a vivid delight, such as the whole defunct race of governesses, morning or resident, had failed to awaken in her.

So things progressed, through half a dozen lessons. Then, one sunless afternoon, sky and sea and speck of island painted in half-tones, misty, dubious as the happiness of human life, came the rattle as of a score of chained cap-

tives along the avenue of Tintajoux. Marjorie, pacing up and down the schoolroom as she boldly struggled with the irregularities of a Greek verb, recognised the sound of Cassandra's cart-wheels. Pushing Delectus and exercise books aside, she ran forth joyfully to meet her friend. Had not important news to be told? Our Cambridge B.A. thinking good things possible in the direction of Girton, the emancipation of those benighted Spanish women, who only know how to manage their house or fold their mantilla gracefully, a few prospective inches advanced!

'You are inkier than ever, Marjorie Bartrand.'

This was Miss Tighe's first personal observation, thrown back over her shoulder as she knotted Midge, the unkempt Brittany pony, to a rail, with one of the sundry odds and ends of rope stowed away in readiness within that all-containing cart of hers.

'Only about the wrists,' Marjorie pleaded, holding out the sleeve of her holland pinafore.

‘But I don’t see that University teaching puts flesh on your bones. You are growing too much like that picture of your mother. Eyes are all very well, especially handsome ones, but one wants something more than eyes in a face. You would have done much better’—who shall say Cassandra was not right—‘much better to come with Annette and me to Sark, jelly-fish hunting.’

The speech gave an impression of being double-shotted. But Marjorie with unwonted meekness made no retort until she and her visitor were within shelter of the drawing-room. There, in the familiar presence of the buhl Cupids, of the miniature Bartrands, who had danced, loved or hated each other, and gone to the guillotine with such easy grace, the girl felt herself protected—oh, Marjorie, from what dim vision of a sin could that white soul need protection? She began the story of her days, and of her intercourse with Geff Arbuthnot, bravely.

‘I feel half-way towards Little Go, Miss

Tighe. 'I get my six hours' teaching a week, and——'

'You have always had teaching in abundance,' remarked Cassandra, wilfully misinterpreting her. 'Since you were twelve, you have had Madame Briquebec six hours a week.'

'Madame Briquebec—a music mistress!'

'Six hours' lessons, and twelve hours' practice. It would require a Cambridge mathematician,' observed Cassandra, 'to reckon how many years' solid capital, out of a lifetime, are given by young women to such an instrument as the piano!'

'I am not talking of the piano, as you know, Miss Tighe,' cried Marjorie, the heart within her rallying at the scent of coming strife. 'I never practised less for poor old Madame Briquebec than I do now. I talk of my six hours' solid reading with Mr Arbuthnot.'

'Ah! I trust you find Mr. Arbuthnot solidly satisfactory?'

‘My tutor thinks well of my staying power. Mr. Arbuthnot sees no reason why, if I gave my life up to it for four years, I should not, some day, come out low in a Tripos.’

‘Mr. Arbuthnot, like the rest of the world, knows, perhaps, upon which side his bread is buttered.’

The suggestion was Cassandra’s.

‘Bread—buttered! Let me tell you, ma’am, I think that a most harsh speech! Yes!’ cried Marjorie Bartrand, her face aflame, ‘and verging on spiteful. A speech most unworthy of Cassandra Tighe.’

‘To my mind the subject scarcely necessitates so much indignation, Marjorie.’

‘And to mine, it does. If you implied anything, it must be that Mr. Arbuthnot flatters me from motives of self-interest, which is vile.’

Old Cassandra took off her leather driving gloves; she pressed out their folds slowly. Then she examined a signet-ring, masculine in size and device, which was always worn by her on the third finger of the left hand.

‘Mr. Arbuthnot comes to visit you, professionally, three days a week.’ Speaking thus she did not lift her eyes to the young girl’s face. ‘He comes to Tintajeux at other times, naturally?’

‘He came on that first evening when we engaged him—I mean, when Mr. Arbuthnot was good enough to promise to read with me. It was fine warm weather, you must remember—the night before you left for Sark. Grand-papa invited Mr. Arbuthnot to drink tea with us, and afterwards I walked as far as the Hüets, to put him on the right track for getting home by Gros Nez.’

‘He speaks to you, frequently, of the poor, stay-at-home Griselda wife, I make no doubt.’

The blood rose up, less at the question than at Cassandra’s way of putting it, to Marjorie’s cheeks.

‘My tutor has never spoken to me of Mrs. Arbuthnot. You decided, Miss Tighe, that day when we talked it over under the cedars,

that there might be an indelicacy in my mentioning her too abruptly. And during our hours of reading we work, and work hard. I think,' said Marjorie, lifting her small face aloft, 'that as regards the learning of classics and Euclid, it matters nothing to me whether Mrs. Geoffrey Arbuthnot stay at home or walk abroad.'

'Mrs. *Geoffrey*!' repeated Cassandra. 'Oh, that, certainly, is not the name. I may have led you wrong in the first instance. Geoffrey is not the name of the man people talk so much about.'

Marjorie walked off to the schoolroom, from whence she presently returned with Geoffrey's card, one that he had enclosed in his first stiff business note to the heiress of Tintajoux.

'Samson, Samuel, Cyril. I am nearly sure of Samson,' mused Cassandra. 'Accuracy as to names and dates was a kind of heirloom in our family.'

'The name of my coach is Geoffrey,' said

Marjorie Bartrand. 'Behold it, Miss Tighe, in black and white—Geoffrey Arbuthnot, B.A., Cantab.'

'I cannot make this out at all. The whole thing is so fresh in my memory. Coming up from the harbour I called in at Miller's. It was but human to ask that poor, weak, unreliable woman about her throat. Well, although she has swallowed Dr. Thorne's drugs, Marjorie, she is recovering. Nature is so perverse in these chronic invalids.'

'Recovering sufficiently to retail a fruity bit of gossip, which Miss Tighe enjoyed. I wonder whether the world was as scandal-loving in *your* days?' said Marjorie, addressing the calm-eyed group of Bartrands beside the chimneypiece. 'You were not a moral generation. Perhaps when glass heads were universal, stone-throwing was less in vogue.'

'Poor Mrs. Miller threw no stones. She told me plain and sad facts about these young Arbuthnot people. The husband for ever philandering in the train of certain idle ladies

belonging to our island society, the wife watching up for him till all hours of the morning, people, very naturally, speculating right and left——’

But Cassandra Tighe stopped short. Like an arrow from a bow Marjorie’s slip of a figure had shot across the drawing-room. She stood at her old friend’s knee. A pair of eyes glowing with all the force of strong, fiery, yet most generous temper, looked down upon Cassandra’s face.

‘I hate the speculations of malicious tongues, Miss Tighe. I will never believe that Geoffrey Arbuthnot “philanders,” whatever the term means, or treats his wife neglectfully. I know him to be manly, straightforward, true. I think Griselda ought to be happy, oh! happy quite beyond the common lot.’

The last words were not uttered without a quiver of Marjorie Bartrand’s lip.

Miss Tighe finished, we may well believe, with the theme of love and lovers some thirty-five or forty years before the present time. Was

the subject ever of vital personal moment to her? A jealously worn signet-ring, the portrait of a scarlet-coated, dark-eyed lad that hung in her drawing-room, were the only evidence to warrant intimate friends in hazarding a tentative 'yes.' Her present interests, said the people of a young and irreverent generation, were of fish, fishy. Are fibres discernible under the microscope in a dogfish's brain? Can a mollusc see, or only distinguish, between light and darkness? One thing was certain. In Cassandra Tighe's breast lingered all tender, all womanly sympathy in the troubles of humanity at large. And something in Marjorie's voice touched her, not to distrust, but compassion. She looked, with the pain that is half foreboding, at the young girl's ardent, indignant face.

'Marjorie Bartrand, we are old friends. You always take the lectures I give you in good part.'

'I may do so occasionally, Miss Tighe, very occasionally. Let us keep to facts.'

‘I hope you will take a little lecture in good part, now. Drive to Petersport to-morrow, and call on Mrs. Samson Arbuthnot.’

‘Mrs. Geoffrey Arbuthnot. With so many fables afloat, let us snatch, ma’am, pray, at whatever truth we may.’

‘Mrs. Geoffrey, if you choose. Although my conviction is unshaken. Drive in to Petersport to-morrow. Call upon your tutor’s wife. Remember her want of birth and education, imagine a little excusable jealousy. Put yourself, in short, in her place, and I am sure your good heart——’

‘I have no heart. Grandpapa, the whole of my governesses, have impressed that upon me often.’

‘Your good common sense, then, will teach you how you can best befriend her. That is my lecture.’

Marjorie moved away into the nearest window. She looked out, athwart garden, orchard, moor, towards the Atlantic, grey, sullen, as though the season had gone back from June to

December. A sense of deeply wounded pride, of cruel, inexplicable disappointment mingled in the girl's heart.

'I ought to have done the right thing,' so she communed with herself. 'I ought to have done it at once. I have just drifted into mean-ness. As though it could matter to us Bar-trands if every woman in the island declined to call on Mrs. Artbuthnot. It was you, Miss Tighe,' she turned round incisively on Cas-sandra, 'who preached to me the gospel of Mammon.'

'And one hears such nice things said of her, poor dear. The faults are so obviously the husband's. Really, if I could have known all one knows now, my wisest advice would have been—keep clear of them both! In these prickly affairs, in anything connected with a *mésalliance*, you are pretty sure to get your hand stung, whichever way you grasp your nettle.'

'Too late in the day for pensive regrets,

Miss Tighe. I have not kept clear of Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot.'

'The more the pity. As matters stand, Marjorie, I know that your conduct will be full of the sweetest tact. We have a few old-fashioned rules,' said good, well-meaning Cassandra, 'to guide us in our perplexities. The first is, to do unto others as we would they should do unto us.'

'To-day is not Sunday.' Marjorie's foot tapped a quick little tune on the polished floor. 'Please don't let us have Sunday talk.'

'How should we feel if we were Mrs. Arbuthnot? If you were Mrs. Arbuthnot, how would you wish Marjorie Bartrand should do unto you?'

Cassandra's tone was plaintively sentimental, infalliblest tone of all to stir up mischief, never far from the surface, in Marjorie Bartrand's heart.

'How should I feel if I were Mrs. Arbuthnot? Wish that I had my precious liberty back, of course, and envy every girl I met hers—the

natural feelings, one would hope, of all well-conducted, sensible married women. Ah,' ejaculated Marjorie, folding her lithe arms, and with darkness like that of a swiftly-gathered thunder-cloud on her Southern face, 'and to hear people talk as though such things as roaming husbands and weeping wives were *necessities*, as though the doom of the serpent was laid upon every son and daughter of Adam. A Dieu ne plaise that it should be so! There is one girl,' striking her breast emphatically, 'in Her British Majesty's dominions who will shed tears for no man while she lives!'

'We will hope so, Marjorie,' said Cassandra, as she put on her driving gloves. 'A good many of us have held the same opinions at seventeen, and yet had occasion to modify them later on.'

CHAPTER X.

‘THEY SAY——’

BUT the thunder-shower soon broke, the blue sky showed beyond. Tears Marjorie Bartrand shed none. What sorrows had she of her own, what sweetheart, philandering or otherwise, to weep for? In regard of Geoffrey's unknown wife, her brief-lived cynicism shifted, ere Cassandra had been gone an hour, into most genuine, most girl-like pity. After an outburst of temper, however scornful or unjust, there was ever in Marjorie's heart a pungent and fiery fidelity which led her back, straight as magnet to steel, to her better self.

That she should be disappointed in Geoffrey's character was, she told herself, inevitable. What is there in any man that one should not, on close

acquaintance, be disappointed in him? She had thought, judging from frank and plainly given confidences, that she knew, to a minute, how her tutor's time was passed here in Guernsey. A little hospital work daily, Geff having met an old college friend in the house surgeon; a little study for his next Cambridge exam.; a good deal of boating; a good many walks round the island; three days a week, his reading with herself at Tintajeux. The picture had been a clear, a pleasant one in Marjorie's sight. And now matter so alien as this of fashionable fine ladies, midnight domestic scenes, idlers speculating right and left, must come, unwelcome and ugly blots, on the canvas.

She was disappointed in Geoffrey, personally. She felt, with the certainty of her age, that she could not work under him again with the bright unblemished interest of the past days. The change of feeling should be made up, Marjorie determined, by kindness shown to his wife. On Mrs. Arbuthnot she pledged herself to call to-morrow. Meantime, yes, during the forenoon

lesson, she would assume a sterner manner towards this recreant husband, this sober-mannered student who, after all one hoped of him, was so little raised at heart above the pitiful vanities of his sex.

And in the first place her own waist-ribbon must be summarily returned. This was Marjorie's resolve when her head rested on its pillow. The waist-ribbon which, for fear of wounding Geoffrey's feelings (his wife's, perhaps, vicariously), she had suffered her tutor to keep, must be returned. Looking upon him in this new—alas! to Marjorie's experienced mind, this too familiar—character of a philanderer, she could imagine him, married though he was, exhibiting that bit of ribbon among his companions as a trophy. 'A gift, don't you know, bestowed on one by a fair hand that shall be nameless.' Or he might show it among the idle fine ladies—oh, the hot shame at Marjorie's sleepy heart—the idle ladies in whose train he followed, while his wife, ignorant of Euclid or Greek, but not *devoid of human nature*, shed

tears, not one single drop whereof the man was worthy, at home.

Marjorie Bartrand fell asleep in a state of the most pointed and virtuous indignation. Morning brought her back, as it brings back all of us, not to accidental emotion, but to the common habit of life. Her habit was to rise the moment her eyes unclosed, open her window, and gladly welcome the new day. She did so now. Standing in her white night-dress, the elastic air blowing on her face, she looked across a corner of the orchard to the spot where Geoffrey, the crescent moon shining, plucked the briar roses above her reach. Away in the distant fields she saw the Reverend Andros, as he walked to and fro with firm slow step among his men. On her dressing-table lay an algebra paper, always her hardest work, which she intended resolutely to 'floor' before her tutor's coming.

How sweet life was, thought the little girl, how full of fine things that no man's hand can take from us! Might it not be wisdom, even

in a Mrs. Geoffrey Arbuthnot, as she had committed the error of marriage, to make the best of it—enjoy the sun that shone, the wind that blew, by day, and look upon sleep, not weeping, as the state for which nature designs our race at midnight!

After a swim in the bay, a brisk run up to the manoir, Marjorie, with hunger befitting her years, kept her grandfather in excellent countenance at his breakfast, a solid country meal at which broiled fish, ham and eggs from the farmyard, home-made rolls and Guernsey buttered cake predominated. Then she went to the school-room, and long before a figure she watched for rose above the moor's horizon, had got the better of her paper.

Her wits were at their brightest this morning. Geoffrey Arbuthnot, for the first time since they had known each other, threw out a few crumbs of praise when the reading closed. Crumbs of plain household bread, be it understood—no sugar, no spice—but that caused Marjorie's heart to beat, the blood

to leap swiftly into her mobile, all-confessing face.

Geff watched her with admiration he sought not to hide. They had been working under the cedars, as was their habit in these fair summer forenoons. A solitary beam of sunlight pierced the thick and odorous shade. It fell full on Marjorie, looking more like a child than usual in an unadorned cotton frock, and with her silky raven hair spread out to dry, unconfined by comb or ribbon, over her shoulders.

‘The endowments of life certainly don’t go to those who need them most.’ Geff gave utterance to the truism with the want of preface that was his habit. ‘Many a pale-faced, hard-working village schoolmistress would have her path smoothened by possessing a tenth part of your brains. While for you——’

The words were leaving his lips in blunt fidelity. They were not well considered words, perhaps. Which of us can stand on mental tiptoe every hour of the twenty-four? But they were about as innocent of premeditated

flattery as was ever speech offered by man to civilised woman.

Marjorie interrupted him shortly ; dormant indignation against poor Geff as a frequenter of idle society, a midnight reveller, a careless husband, flaming forth on him, lightning wise.

‘For me, Marjorie Bartrand, living on rose leaves in Tintajeux Manoir—oh ! I should be equally charming with brains or without them, should not I ? Thank you immensely for the compliment, sir. If I could change places I would rather be the village schoolmistress, plainly doing her day’s work for her day’s wages, than live idly on all the rose leaves, all the flatteries, the world could heap together.’ Then lifting her eyes, a look in them to pierce a guilty man’s soul, ‘At what time should I be likely to find Mrs. Arbuthnot at home ?’ she asked him with cold directness. ‘I shall drive in to Miller’s Hotel. I shall call on Mrs. Arbuthnot this afternoon.’

A flush of undisguised pleasure went over

Geoffrey's face. All these days he had hoped that some offer of the kind would come from Marjorie, not doubting that in this small island rumours of Dinah's beauty, perhaps of Dinah's troubles, must have reached as far as Tintajoux.

'I am afraid Mrs. Arbuthnot is to be found at home at most hours.'

'So I am told.'

'Dinah goes out too little in this fine June weather.'

'Mrs. Arbuthnot must amend her ways. To-day is our Guernsey rose show. There will be military bands playing, dandies promenading,' said Miss Bartrand witheringly, as she glanced at Geff's undandified figure, 'fine ladies thinking and talking of everything under God's sun save the roses. Some of Mrs. Arbuthnot's friends will surely tempt her to join the gay crowd in the Arsenal?'

'Dinah has no friends. I mean, we have been too short a time in Guernsey to look for many callers. In the matter of visiting-

cards, ladies, I am told, are prone to be sequacious.'

So did Geff, with single-minded good-will, seek to round off the edges of Dinah Arbuthnot's isolation, of Gaston's neglect.

'And yet they say,' cried Marjorie, her heart palpitating well-nigh to pain, 'that Mrs. Arbuthnot's husband has acquaintance without stint.'

'You must not believe half "they" say, when men and women's domestic concerns are the theme of conversation. Mrs. Arbuthnot's husband chanced to meet accidentally with a Doctor and Mrs. Thorne here. The lady was a friend of former student days in Paris. It was the kind of meeting,' added Geff apologetically, 'in which a man has no choice but to renew an acquaintance, and——'

'And Linda Thorne, of course, has called upon Mrs. Arbuthnot?'

The question came like a sword-thrust from Marjorie Bartrand.

'I I am afraid not yet,' answered Geoffrey, with hesitation.

Gaston's careless conduct in regard of Dinah was just the one subject that could occasion straightforward Geoffrey's tongue to stammer.

'Ah! Linda Thorne has not called on Mrs. Arbuthnot. That lowers one's opinion,' mused Marjorie, 'not too high at any time, of Linda Thorne.'

'When you meet Dinah you will see that she is a woman to care little for the common run of morning callers.'

'I shall endeavour just the same to make her care for me.'

Marjorie's tones were icy, a swell of curiously mixed feeling was in her breast.

'Endeavour will not be needed. I never made too sure,' said Geff modestly, 'that you would pay this visit. But I know that Dinah, in her heart, is more than prepared to bid you welcome.'

He rose, visibly reluctant, from the cool

green sward. Then with a sense that some subtle, intangible change had crept into his relations with his pupil, Geff prepared to take his leave.

But perilous stuff had yet to be dislodged from Marjorie Bartrand's conscience. She would not call upon the wife while that bit of Spanish ribbon, a loan made in a moment of foolish high spirits, remained unchallenged in the husband's possession.

‘I hope you have taken care of something I lent you, sir. A piece of coloured ribbon tied round those flowers I sent, the first evening grandpapa and I had the pleasure of knowing you, to Mrs. Arbuthnot.’

‘To Mrs. Arbuthnot. This is rough on a man,’ cried Geff. ‘Why, Miss Bartrand, you must have forgotten. Those flowers were given to me.’

‘Don’t make too certain of that.’

‘But I am certain. I can see you as you stood in the strip of moonlight by the water-lane, wishing me good-night. Your last words

were, "the flowers are for yourself—your better self."

'The ribbon, at least, was given to no one,' retorted Marjorie, changing colour under his gaze. 'It was lent to hinder you from breaking your neck. You meant to climb the Gros Nez cliffs if you could. To do that a real good Guernsey man needs his hands, both of them, and I thought it a pity——'

'The real good Guernsey night should be disfigured by a stupid stranger leaving the world too tragically. I thank you heartily,' went on Geff, as the girl blushed deeper and deeper. 'I measured the extent of your sympathy to an inch, at the time.'

A ring of absolute independence was in his voice; a suspicion lurked there, too, of hardly restrained laughter. For the situation was taking hold of him. Let us see, thought Geoffrey, in this feather-light matter of keeping or not keeping a morsel of sash ribbon, how far the small shrew could be tamed? Let

us see which of the two should fitly, in the end, be styled conqueror?

So he thought, by no means forecasting that this feather-light matter of keeping a morsel of sash ribbon might be the pivot on which his life's fortunes should one day turn.

CHAPTER XI.

‘DODO’S DESPAIR.’

‘My sympathy, I believe, was rightly bestowed,’ said Marjorie frigidly. ‘I would not see the poorest wandering pedlar start for the Gros Nez cliffs without helping him to the extent I helped you. Even a pedlar might have a wife at home, sir. A foolish fond creature, shedding tears of anxiety for him in his absence.’

The side-thrust did not seem to scathe Geoffrey’s conscience as it should have done.

‘Would you make it a special point that this married pedlar should return you your ribbon, Miss Bartrand?’

‘I make it a point that Mr. Arbuthnot shall do so.’ Marjorie delivered her ultimatum unflinchingly. ‘The ribbon is worthless except

as a memento of some happy days I spent in Cadiz once, totally worthless to any living person but me.'

'And why should it not be a memento of happy days spent in Guernsey by myself?'

She looked him straight between the eyes, too hotly, dangerously irate to make immediate answer.

'Suppose, leading a prosaic life in the thick of bricks and mortar, that length of ribbon could act as a kind of talisman.'

'I don't understand you in the least.'

'A charm bringing back to one's tired eyes and heart the blue summer night, the smell of moon-coloured hay fields, the whole moment when it was given to me.'

'I will suppose nothing of the sort. It was not given. This is vapid, sentimental talk,' said Marjorie, concentrating her thoughts firmly on absent Dinah. 'And I abhor sentiment.'

'On that solitary point we agree.'

'The ribbon I lent you to tie round Mrs. Arbuthnot's flowers is just a yard of woven,

parti-coloured silk. Buy the best match you can find to it, in the nearest mercer’s shop. It will be as good a talisman.’

‘Are you a materialist, Miss Bartrand? Would you say that the ragged colours of one of the Duke’s regiments, the pennants of one of Nelson’s ships, were so much woven silk, more or less stained and weather torn?’

‘I do not see that my sash ribbon can or should be of the smallest interest to Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot,’ observed Marjorie, the blood leaping, more swiftly than it had done under his praise, to her cheek.

In this moment she was a woman, the childish cotton frock, the hair hung out to dry, the slim immature figure notwithstanding. A dawning of her sex’s shame burned at her heart as she turned her looks away from him. In this moment, were it possible to assign place and date to matter so intangible, I should say that Geff Arbuthnot first, distinctly, began to fall in love.

‘And suppose *I* feel that your sash can and

ought to be of the greatest possible interest to me?' he urged.

Marjorie found no answer to her hand. If she had been reared under a different rule to Andros Bartrand's, if she had associated more with girls, had frequented afternoon-teas and garden-parties, she would, doubtless, even in innocent little Sarnia, have learned the formula by which a married man, hazarding idle speeches, ought mildly and effectually to be crushed.

Marjorie knew no more of flirtation or of its dialects than she did of Sanscrit. She had gone through an engagement, once, during a brief uncomfortable fortnight; an experience which took the taste for lovers and lovers' vows most adequately out of her young mouth. And now—oh, now she never meant to marry! She had her Greek and Latin in the present, a large outlook for herself and others in the future. Of flirtation she knew nothing, of engagements she knew too much! And she liked Geff Arbuthnot, and did not like the

duties of repressing his frivolity, or of ranging herself against him in the civil wars of his home life. Yet to the utmost of her strength should both these duties be fulfilled.

'Your interests were appropriated long before you ever saw me,' she replied at last. 'What hour, this afternoon, would it be convenient, pray, for me to visit Mrs. Arbuthnot?'

Her tone, her look, might for a moment have suggested to Geoffrey that the secret of his youth had made unto itself wings and flown to Tintajoux. Only the very supposition were wild! Gaston, Dinah herself had never suspected the passionate madness which, in the May twilight of long ago, used to draw him night after night to the little thatched, rose-covered cottage at Lesser Cheriton.

'Mrs. Arbuthnot? For anything I know to the contrary, Dinah will be at home between three and four o'clock.'

'And at our next reading, sir, you will bring back my ribbon.'

'I made no promise.'

‘Of what mortal use can a bit of ribbon be to you, Mr. Arbuthnot?’

‘I have had thoughts of turning this particular ribbon into a book-marker,’ said Geff, boldly imaginative.

‘A book-marker! I ask you—do you think it honest to keep property that belongs to other people?’

‘My conscience, I must confess, does not prick me.’

‘If I order, will you obey?’

Marjorie had turned abruptly pale. Her mouth quivered.

‘If you order, I submit,’ said Geff, watching her gravely. ‘I will never go against your smallest wish, while I live. You shall have your ribbon before our next lesson, Miss Bartrand, I promise.’

The shadow of a quarrel was between them when they bade good-bye. And at the thought of this shadow Marjorie’s illogical spirit was sore vexed. But I think Geff Arbuthnot walked back to town with a lighter spirit in

his breast than had reigned there since the moment when he first saw Dinah and Gaston as lovers, hand clasping hand, in the little Cambridgeshire orchard.

His knowledge of young girls, their instability, their hot and cold fits, their tempers, their fluctuating emotions, had been derived from books. So his theories on the subject were mainly worthless. But men who in after days rival neither Thackeray nor Balzac, do often, during one phase of their own experience, make keen enough guesses as to the source of female weakness. Geoffrey felt, with an instinct's force, that Marjorie Bartrand's blanched cheeks, her quivering lip, her passionate tones, were not the outcome of childish anger. He felt, with an instinct's force, that the girl herself was a child no longer. Whither must this altered state of things tend ?

The question was complex ; and Geoffrey willingly let it rest. As he walked, the warm air was briar-scented, the birds murmured lazy midday nothings to each other amidst the lush

hedges, the voice of Marjorie Bartrand filled his heart. What need to hope or fear for the future when one is twenty-four years old, and the actual living hour has a hold, delicious as this, upon the senses !

Dinah and her husband were alone together, a quiet little picture of domestic still life, when Geff reached the hotel.

A vine-trellised slip of courtyard lay outside the north window of Mrs. Arbuthnot's sitting-room. Here, during the sunny forenoons, Gaston, picturesquely bloused, found it pleasant to work, when he was sufficiently in the vein to work at all. He wore his blouse, was in the vein, now. That which two days ago was a mass of rough clay, showed the airy outlines of a baby-girl, seated on a Brobdingnagian shell, one small foot neatly shod and socked, the other clasped, naked, between her dimpled hands, in an attitude of inimitable, three-year-old dismay.

‘We label this work of genius “The Lost

Shoe," or "Dodo's Despair," or some equally pathetic and unhackneyed title,' remarked the sculptor, as Geff entered upon the scene. 'We get our so many guineas for it, from our masters, and solicit further orders, do we not, Dinah?'

'You should have no master but your art,' was Dinah's answer.

'That is easily said. My wife, as usual, Geff, is urging upon me to fulfil my mission, to deliver messages, to begin big and serious work. But I fancy I gauge my own depths justly. I have no messages whatever to deliver to anybody. These trickeries of Philistine sentiment,' Gaston pointed with a shapely clay-stained hand to his model, 'are always a success. In the first place, they draw tears from Mr. and Mrs. Prud'homme. In the second, the dealers approve them. What more can an artist's heart desire?'

'Everything,' replied Dinah.

But she spoke in parenthesis, and under her breath.

‘Am I anatomical, Geoffrey? This must always be important, whether a man work with or without a mission. How about this bend in the left knee-joint? Are my muscles right?’

Geoffrey offered one or two strictly professional criticisms; then after admiring the grace, the charm of the little clay sketch, gave his uncompromising moral support to Dinah.

Whoever possesses genius—well, talent, no need to fight over words—lies under the behest of duty. Gaston’s duty, the one straight and unmistakable road that lay before him, was to abandon conventional prettiness, to go in for the expression of the highest thoughts that were in him.

‘I am destitute of high thoughts,’ said Gaston, his refined, intellectual face belying the assertion. ‘I have not the prophet’s rôle. If I tried to soar, I should immediately afterwards have to climb down. I have no original ideas to embody——’

‘Gaston!’ broke, with an accent of denial, from Dinah’s lips.

‘And the dealers, Farrago in Pall Mall especially, are my masters. Before I left town Farrago’s advice was memorable. “The market demands nothing classic in statuettes, Mr. Arbuthnot. Nothing romantic. Above all, nothing to make us think. The market demands trifles, sir, trifles. Objects for the smoke-room or boudoir. Domestic amenities, as you agreeably say, for Monsieur and Madame Prud’homme! And, for wider sections of society, “flavour.” In any case, trifles. Nothing, if you please, to make us think.”’

‘Instead of obeying,’ exclaimed Dinah, ‘you ought to say, “I, Gaston Arbuthnot, must do such and such work, no other. Let Mr. Farrago take my statuettes or leave them, as he likes.”’

‘That style of talk is for giants, my dear child—putting aside the fact that I am bound to Farrago for another six months. Carlyle talked so to the Edinburgh Reviewers. Viewed by the light of after success his talk may sound grand. If Carlyle had not speedily written

the "French Revolution" it would have been called "tall."

'But I want you to write your "French Revolution" in clay,' Dinah persisted. 'Here, in Guernsey, you know, you planned to make studies, always studies, for the great work you will set about in Florence. But then,' a piece of embroidery was between Dinah's hands; she lifted her eyes from her wools and silks at this juncture, and fixed them, full of earnest reproach, on Gaston, 'there have been unfortunate throw-backs.'

'Throw-backs! As how?' Gaston Arbuthnot applied himself to the correction of one of the points anatomically criticised by Geoffrey. 'As long as I am bound to Farrago, even feminine morality, my love, will allow that I should be honest. Every saleable thing I do must pass, as per contract, through Farrago's hands. Taking one day with another, I have got through rather more work than the average, here in Guernsey.'

'Have you put your own thoughts into

form, Gaston? This model, when it is finished'—she glanced somewhat coldly at 'Dodo's Despair'—'will be a portrait of Rahnee Thorne, simply.'

'Rahnee Thorne, idealised!' Gaston's rejoinder was made with the unruffled temper that characterised him. 'My clay infant has flesh upon her bones, and an infant's face. Rahnee, though I love the child, is but a poor little wizened Bengalee, at her best.'

'Will the portrait of Rahnee's mamma, the model you have on hand at The Bungalow, need to be idealised also?'

'Dinah, you should be magnanimous.' And with a movement that in a less composed man might have been a shrug of the shoulders, Mr. Arbuthnot prepared to clean the clay from his hands. 'A pretty woman—well, if you shake your head, an exceedingly beautiful woman—need never utter a sarcasm about a plain one.'

At the negative compliment a colour, soft as the pure pink veining of a shell cameo, stained Dinah's face. Her breast throbbed. And all

the time the speech, delicious in sound, signified nothing. Gaston had been engaged for days past to escort plain Mrs. Linda to the rose show, and felt not the smallest temptation to break his engagement. Dinah must be magnanimous! Dinah's husband, after two or three hours' facile work on 'Dodo's Despair,' needed relaxation, and would have it.

'You ought to take me to the show, Geff,' she pleaded, turning round half jestingly, half in earnest, to Geoffrey. 'What would Linda Thorne, what would Gaston think, if I suddenly made my appearance among all the fine ladies of Guernsey?'

'Linda Thorne might have her own views,' said Gaston. 'When Dinah Arbuthnot shows her face, every fine lady, in Guernsey, or elsewhere, must be on the spot eclipsed.'

Whatever Dinah thought, Geff knew that a certain insincerity underlay the speech, and controlled a pungent remark with effort. The friendship of the Arbuthnot trio was never more sharply paradoxical than at this moment.

CHAPTER XII.

YELLOW-BACKED NOVELS.

THE June rose-show stands second only to Her Majesty's Birthday among the big events of the Channel Islands' calendar.

By three o'clock the road between Petersport and the Arsenal plateau was filled with a growing stream of men and women. Simple rose lovers many of them, but some lovers of another kind. And some roses themselves! What buoyant young figures fluttered past the window whence Dinah Arbuthnot, shrouded from view, undreaming of her own future, watched the crowd! What ruddy fine complexions were here, what well-shapen noses and mouths, what dark Norman eyes! Why, you might scour half a dozen English counties

before you could bring together as many handsome girls as would soon be within the Guernsey Arsenal's four walls. Must not excuse be made—the thought was Dinah's—for an artist who should long to stock his brain's tablets with so much beauty, even though an idle tear or two, a little discontent in someone left at home, must be the price of his experience?

She strove her best to be magnanimous, to give a valiant 'yes' to this self-propounded question. Then, even as she made the effort, a group of persons drew nigh from the direction of Petersport, at the sight of whom, poor Dinah's magnanimity and the wifely heart that beat in her breast stood instantly at variance. Her hands turned cold and rigid. A prophecy, rather than an actual living look of jealous anger, swept all the youthful gentleness from her face.

A group of four persons: Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot, Mrs. Thorne, the small daughter, Rahnee, and a native nurse. Dazzling was Mrs. Linda in whatever furbelows and head

gear local Parisian milliners had impressed on the feminine Sarnian mind as the 'last thing out.' Overdecked in embroidery and ribbons was Rahnee, a sorrowfully thin little child, with dark-ringed eyes, sallow cheeks, bangles on wrist. A typical Indian child, perverse, sickly, unruly, and who at the present moment was dancing, knowingly and deliberately, on her mother's fragile flounces at every second step.

'I am sure one ought to reform her.' Thus Linda would make confession among her matron friends. 'But what is to be done as long as you keep an ayah? You must reform the ayah first. That is just the one enthusiasm of humanity which is outside my reach, to reform an ayah.'

Rahnee, I repeat, danced persistently and with effect on her mother's cobweb furbelows, as she capered and twisted herself along the street. Linda's expression was as little honeyed as the expression of a coquette can ever be in the presence of a man she seeks to charm.

The ayah vainly gesticulated, vainly uttered expostulations in unknown Eastern tongues from the rear. Breakdown and rout of one or other of the forces seemed imminent. Suddenly, just as they were passing the hotel—perhaps it was this incident stabbed Dinah's unreasoning heart to the quick—Gaston came to the fore as mediator. Holding out both hands, Gaston Arbuthnot offered small Rahnee a place on his shoulder. Dinah could hear his pleasant voice, indicative of a mind content with its surroundings, as he began some sage nursery talk, all-engrossing, it would seem, to Rahnee's soul. The thin arms closed round his neck, the tiny primrose-gloved fingers played with his hair. Mrs. Linda, a restored picture of amiable maternity, trotted behind. The ayah followed after; her black orbs pantomiming unspeakable things to such portions of the Guernsey world as had been chance witnesses of the scene. Then, domestic-wise, the group of four persons went their way.

A choking, hysterical lump rose in Dinah's

throat. With a vague sense of her own worthiness, a suspicion that if Dinah Arbuthnot was out of keeping with sunshine and flowers and little children, Dinah Arbuthnot herself must be to blame, she watched Gaston and his friends until they had turned the corner towards the Arsenal. Barely was the final shimmer of Linda's flounces lost to view, when a clatter of hoofs approached rapidly along the Petersport road. A miniature phaeton with a girl driver, and drawn by a pair of small black ponies, came in sight. A minute later, and Marjorie Bartrand, who had drawn up before the portico of the hotel, was inquiring—yes, there could be no mistake; through the open windows the sound of her own name reached Dinah distinctly—‘ If Mrs. Arbuthnot was at home ? ’

Dinah had not received one morning visitor in Guernsey. How many morning visitors (upon Mrs., not Mr., Arbuthnot) had Dinah received since her marriage? The unexpected respectability of the event—for our Tintajoux Bartrands, mind you, with all their eccentricity,

stand on the topmost rung of the social insular ladder—moved Mr. Miller's mind. A man of tact and discrimination, the host proceeded himself to usher Marjorie in.

The Arbuthnots' parlour door was thrown open with an air. 'Miss Bartrand of Tintajoux' was announced in Miller's most professional voice. Then came the meeting to which Marjorie had looked forward with resolute conscience, perhaps with lurking doubts as to the cordiality of the reception that should await her.

'This is very good of you.' Dinah spoke in her usual voice. She came forward with the simplicity that draws so near to De Vere repose. 'Geoffrey never warned me I was to look for such a pleasure. I take it very kind of you to come, Miss Bartrand.'

Dinah's trouble had just reached that level when the smallest act of good will, from friend or stranger, may cause the cup to overflow. Her eyes suffused, her colour heightened.

'Mr. Arbuthnot thought I should be likely

to find you at home this afternoon. I wanted to see you long ago!' cried Marjorie, her gaze fixed on the face whose delicate beauty so far overpassed her expectations. 'But I waited—I thought,' stammered the girl, for the first time since she could remember feeling an excuse needed for her conduct—'I thought, of course, Mr. Arbuthnot might ask me to call.'

'Who—Geff?' answered Dinah, with a fleeting, shy smile. 'No, indeed, Miss Bartrand. Geoffrey would not make so bold. He knows too well that I live retired.'

Dinah's phrases were certainly not those of the educated world. But Marjorie, looking open-eyed at the mouth and throat and golden hair, was in no mood to be critical.

'I have lived retired, pretty well from the time I married. My husband does whatever visiting is required of us.'

'That is unfair to the world at large!' cried Marjorie Bartrand, drawing up a chair to the table, where wools and silks lay heaped beside Dinah's patiently progressing canvas.

‘Whatever hermit rules you observe elsewhere we shall make you break through them in Guernsey. I may look at your work? What intricate shading!’ She scanned the pathetic mass of Dinah’s stitches. ‘What a labour of love embroidery must be to you!’

‘It helps pass the time,’ said Dinah Arbuthnot. ‘Wool-work fills up long hours that must else be empty. For I am not a scholar like you, Miss Bartrand, or like Geoffrey. And I only learnt the piano for two years at boarding school, not enough to play well.’

‘Still, you do play?’

Marjorie glanced across at a piano that stood open. A goodly heap of music scores lay on a neighbouring ottoman.

‘Not in such a public place as an hotel. The notes you see there are my husband’s. Mr. Arbuthnot sings, as I dare say you know. He was thought, once on a time, to have the best tenor voice in Cambridge. Some day,’ said Dinah doubtfully, ‘I may play just well enough to accompany him. Unfortunately for

me, the most beautiful of his songs are in French.'

Marjorie bethought her of Geoffrey's accent, and was silent.

'You will have good opportunities of learning French in Guernsey, Mrs. Arbuthnot.'

'Geff wants me to take lessons. We have a French waitress here in the hotel, but she speaks too quick for me, so do my husband and—and Mrs. Thorne. I only understand the sort of French we learned at boarding school—the sort of French the girls talked together,' said poor Dinah modestly.

No books, no languages, no music; only cross-stitch, the counting of canvas threads, to fill one's existence and one's heart. And for life companion, thought Marjorie, a husband who frequented afternoon teas, who warbled 'beautiful' French ditties, in a bad accent, to audiences of women on the level of Linda Thorne!

This vision of Geoffrey, as a singer, added the crowning touch to the girl's disappointment

in his character. Throughout the brief, bitter-tasting epoch when her unwilling hand wore an engagement-ring, she was accustomed to hear French sentiment in an English accent, and an English tenor voice, during at least three hours out of each twenty-four. At this moment the tinkling burthen of one frequent song came back, with a sense of repulsion that was pain, upon her heart.

‘ Si vous n’avez rien à me dire
Pourquoi passez-vous par ici ? ’

She remembered how the white hands of Major Tredennis used to rattle out the accompaniment of that song. She remembered the flower Major Tredennis wore at his buttonhole, the last day he visited Tintajoux—remembered, when she got knowledge of his treachery, how instant and far-reaching was her scorn.

With what honesty did she now scorn all human creatures of the Tredennis stamp ! How loyally would she put herself forward as Dinah’s friend ; yes, although she must forfeit

the reading of mathematics and classics with Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot as her reward !

‘ You have not been here long enough to see much of the island. Of course you are fond of the country ? ’

‘ Well, I was country born and bred. Real country folk, my husband says, set less store upon green fields and hedgerows than the town people.’

‘ But you like being out of doors ? You will walk or drive with me sometimes ? I have a pair of Welsh ponies, capital at scrambling up and down our Guernsey lanes.’

‘ You are very kind, Miss Bartrand, but I can’t quite give an answer. You see I should have to speak to Mr. Arbuthnot.’

Poor Dinah coloured with actual shame at the proposal.

‘ Now, to-day. Why are you not enjoying yourself with the rest of the world at the show ? Guernsey roses, I can tell you, are worth looking at.’

‘ I asked Geff, in joke, of course, to take

me,' Dinah answered. 'But he was not polite enough to say "Yes."'

'Will you come with me?' cried Marjorie. 'As I drove in from Tintajeux, I was getting my courage up all the way to ask you this. I have no chaperon, and now that I am seventeen, nearly a grown-up woman, the old ladies tell my grandfather it is improper I should go about without one. I, who know the island like a cat! You would be doing an act of charity by coming with me to the Arsenal.'

Dinah's face grew irresolute at this piece of special pleading. She crossed to the window, and looked with wistful eyes up the street. She recalled the group which had passed along, a quarter of an hour before. She heard Gaston's voice again, saw the tiny primrose hands clasped round his throat. She thought of Linda Thorne's rainbow-coloured flounces, and of Linda Thorne herself.

'I should like to go.' The truth broke from her after a minute more of hesitation. 'I was feeling duller than usual when you came,

Miss Bartrand, and I do like a flower show above all things. We used to go to the Tiverton shows when my sister and I were girls. Uncle William, who lived bailiff at Lord Lufton's, would take us when the gentle-people were gone. But that,' Dinah interrupted herself hastily, 'was different. We were with Uncle William, we were in our place. I should not be in my place with you. Perhaps you are too young, Miss Bartrand, to see this. My husband is at the Arsenal with his friends, and——'

'Wherever a husband goes is a place for his wife, according to my ideas of matrimony,' said Marjorie, in a careless tone, but with her veracious face aflame. 'I will not hear another excuse. It will be a curiously pleasant surprise for Mr. Arbuthnot when he sees you in my society.'

'The ladies are dressed so elegantly,' objected Dinah, at the same time moving towards the door. 'And I never wear smart things.'

'Neither do I.' In truth, Marjorie wore

one of the plain washed frocks, the sunburnt straw hat, that she wore on the moor at Tintajoux. 'What do smart things or smart people matter to you and me? Dress as you choose, Mrs. Arbuthnot. You will look better than every woman in the Arsenal.'

'I had best put on black. My husband, fortunately, has lovely taste, even in ladies' dress. He tells me black is always the safest thing for me to wear.' ('Black cachemire and silence.' Dinah remembered those were the requisites Gaston advocated, obliquely—the hint concealed by charming flowers of speech—on the solitary occasion when he introduced her to some female members of his family in London.) 'I shall ask you to tell me, Miss Bartrand, about my gloves and ribbons.'

Thus speaking, Dinah passed away through a side door, into her own chamber. For Gaston, with his knack of organising daily life after the manner that best suited himself, had taken a compact little suite of apartments on Mr. Miller's ground floor. And Marjorie, left to

her meditations, glanced around the parlour—in writing of Guernsey, and of Dinah, the old-fashioned word must be excused—for landmarks that should point out its present possessors' tastes.

Dinah was not a woman whose affections tended towards ornament, in art, or in dress. Had they done so, Dinah's life had probably been happier. Her work-basket, with its outlying heaps of silk and wool, was the only sign Marjorie could detect of feminine occupation. What of Dinah's husband? Pipes and cigarette-holders of varying patterns were ranged on either side the mantelpiece. A tobacco jar stood in unabashed evidence on a table. An odour not to be mistaken clung round the draperies of the windows. So this man smoked, thought Marjorie irefully—*smoked* in his beautiful, refined wife's living-room! Yellow-backed French novels abounded (French novels I must confess were an abiding inspiration of Gaston's genius). The neighbourhood of the piano was strewn with French songs. A

volume of Greek poetry, lent to Geoffrey by old Andros Bartrand, lay on a bookshelf. In a corner by the door Marjorie discerned a rough briar walking stick which she recognised as her tutor's property.

As she looked around the room her impulse was to burst into tears. It was but an inn's best parlour. You could not expect the perfume, the grace of Tintajoux under good Mr. Miller's roof. But it was not Louis Seize furniture, or Pompadour cabinets, or Trianon rose-baskets, that Marjorie missed. To pipes and tobacco smoke her life with the Seigneur had accustomed her. Yellow-backed novels did not disturb her conscience. Within limits she could endure French songs. The room repulsed her because it destroyed every dream she had had of Geoffrey! Without the Greek volume, she thought, without the briar stick, even, her disenchantment had been less vivid. She had not been forced to remember him, to admit the lapse into bathos of her own ridiculously high-pitched ideal.

But so the facts stood. 'One may be made a fool twice,' the girl told herself. 'First by a sweetheart, secondly by a friend. Happily Dinah Arbuthnot, not Marjorie Bartrand, must this time pay the reckoning.'

And the tears were in her eyes still. In spite of all disillusionment, her liking for Geff lingered obstinately. She thought she could never again be glad of heart as on that mid-summer night when she curtsied to the moon and wished a wish by her tutor's side on the lawn at Tintajeux.

It took Dinah Arbuthnot fifteen minutes—a real 'quarter of an hour of Rabelais' for Marjorie—to put on hat and gown; fifteen minutes ere she could be sure her appearance would pass muster in the eyes of Linda Thorne. The best and simplest women infrequently dress for the other sex, or for the world at large, or for themselves. They dress for each other, oftenest of all for one especial feminine criticism which they have reason to fear.

'Shall I do, Miss Bartrand?' Dinah peeped,

her exquisite face aflush, through the half-opened door, then she crossed the room to Marjorie; instinct, true as a child's, informing her that in Geoffrey's pupil she had found a friend. 'I want you to pick me to pieces, find as much fault with me as you can.' Shall I do?'

'Do!' repeated Marjorie.

And a volume of hearty admiration was in the monosyllable.

Dinah Thurston, in her girlhood, had learnt dressmaking as a trade. Of dress as a difficult social art, Dinah Arbuthnot knew not the initial letters. Here, her husband was an unfailing monitor. Gaston had an artist's knowledge of colour and effect. He had the sense of fitness belonging to a man of the world. Dinah's apparel might not accurately follow the fashion books. It bore the seal of distinction at all times.

Thus, the 'safe' black dress was absolutely perfect of its kind; plain of make as was meet for such a bust, such shoulders as Dinah's, but

draped by a Parisian hand that knew its cunning. A ruffle of Mechlin lace enhanced the sweet whiteness of the wearer's throat. A velvet-lined hat threw up the outline of the head, the waves of short-cut English-coloured hair, in rich relief.

‘You are lovelier than any picture!’ cried Marjorie, looking at Dinah Arbuthnot with as generous a pleasure, surely, as ever woman felt in the good looks of another.

‘Advise me about my gloves.’ Dinah blushed and drew back at the girl's frank praise. ‘Here are cream-coloured ones, you see, the same shade as my ruffle, and here is a box of long black silk gloves. My husband had them sent from Paris with the gown. Of course, the cream-coloured are the dressiest.’ The tone of Dinah's voice betrayed her own leaning. ‘Mr. Arbuthnot warns me generally against light gloves. My hands, he says, are half a size too large. Still for a flower show——’

‘You must wear the black gloves, Mrs.

Arbuthnot. No shadow of doubt about it! As you see, I don't go in for dandy dress myself,' said Marjorie, 'but one can't help hearing' the whispers of the milliners. These long silk gloves are at present the one righteous thing to wear, in London and in Paris.'

'And no ribbons, no ornament? I have a gold necklace that looks nice on black, and——'

'You want no ornament at all. You must take our little world by storm just as you stand at this moment. Miller has some crimson roses in his garden. We will cut one as we pass. The black of your hat would be better for a single spot of colour.'

By the time Marjorie's fiery Welsh ponies had rushed up to the Arsenal, four o'clock was striking. The rose-show festivities were, for the weak and frivolous, at their culminating point. It was the hour when staid flower-lovers—sensible souls who came to see the real, not the human roses—were leaving, Cassandra Tighe among them.

‘I am starting off to Tintajeux,’ she told Marjorie, as they passed each other at the entrance. ‘The Seigneur’s “Duc de Rohan” has taken a prize, and I must be first to carry the news to the Manoir. Then, with a kindly glance at Dinah, ‘You have done the right thing, have paid your visit,’ she whispered. ‘I don’t see the necessity of mixing yourself up with it all in public. Linda Thorne presides at the refreshment tent, and that wretched man is simply infatuated in his attentions. But the error is generous. Being a Bartrand, you can, I suppose, do nothing by halves.’

‘I consider myself honoured by appearing with Mrs. Arbuthnot,’ returned Marjorie, very low. ‘I want to judge of that wretched man’s conduct at first hand, see facts alive, and extract their meaning by the light of my own common sense.’

CHAPTER XIII.

THROUGH SMOKE-COLOURED SPECTACLES.

THE refreshment tent was pitched at the most conspicuous point of the Arsenal, just within the gates. Here Linda Thorne, assisted by three or four white-muslined aides-de-camp, dispensed strawberries, ices, and tea, liberal of smiles, but most illiberal in charges to the crowd.

Gaston Arbuthnot hovered near, not engaging Mrs. Thorne's attention, but with the air of a man whose freedom is nominal—of a prisoner on parole. The ayah had vanished. Small Rahnee, in a corner, was busily laying up a week's trouble for her tropical digestion over a plate of stolen macaroons. A swarm of well-gloved, well-set-up young gentlemen, subal-

terns, for the most part, of the Maltshire Royals, newly returned from Africa, clustered ornamentally around.

‘Lord Rex,’ cried Linda, in a playful voice appealing to a youth who stood behind her chair, a plain but ultra-dandified youth, with a sunscorched face, sandy hair and eyelashes, and who wore his left arm in a sling. ‘My dear Lord Rex, where are your thoughts to-day? For the third and last time of asking, will you run across to Madame the Archdeaconess, and press her to drink a second cup of tea?’

For Linda, a clever politician, never allowed the present to divert her mindfulness from the future. Belonging—*sub silentio*—to the extreme left of any society in which she found herself, Mrs. Thorne kept a firm grip, here in European coteries, as formerly in Indian stations, on whatever Conservative mainstay might be within her reach. Her Guernsey mainstay was the Archdeacon’s wife. Linda was a member, under Madame Corbie, of cutting-out clubs, district-visiting corps, societies

for persuading members of all denominations to change places with each other, and similar intricate philanthropies of the hour and place. If, occasionally, serious circles looked with misgiving upon some little new escapade, some unaccustomed outbreak of vivacity at The Bungalow, Linda's usefulness floated her. There was such a fund of sterling worth in Linda Thorne! So some old lady would say at whose house Linda perhaps, on the preceding evening, demure as a mouse, had been painting Christmas cards for the Caribbee Islanders. Such energy, such zeal for the weaker brethren! Such a genius for collecting subscriptions, or organising fancy bazaars! And then one must not forget the stock she came of. One must always remember what our dear flighty Linda's grandpapa *was*!

Hence, perhaps, the leniency of the judgments. The old Sarnian ladies never forgot that our dear flighty Linda's grandpapa was an earl.

'Madame Corbie—tea!' echoed Lord Rex

Basire, the sunscorched dandy, absently. 'Ah, there she goes again. The prettiest girl, yes, by Jove! the out-and-outest girl, every way, I have seen in Guernsey. Golden hair, a complexion, a figure . . . Let me take the Venerable her cheering cup at once, and set me free to fly after my Dulcinea.'

'A new Dulcinea?' asked Linda, with a glance as sweet as the cup she had prepared for Madame Corbie. 'I thought Lord Rex Basire had flown after every Dulcinea in the Channel Islands, a long time since.'

Lord Rex broke away without reply, causing a good deal of the Venerable's tea to overflow by reason of his impetuous movements. But he was not set free again as quickly as he desired.

Madame Corbie was what the Scottish bailie called 'a fine respectit half-worn sort of woman.' Her set of immediate worshippers, poorer cousins for the most part, would speak of her beneath their breath as so superior! Madame Corbie never smiled. Madame Corbie

never retracted a step once taken. It was her harmless boast that she had never read a novel in her life—as one would say he had never cut a throat, or picked a pocket. She would wear no black satin that cost less than ten shillings and sixpence (Guernsey currency) per yard. And she surveyed the moral, as she did the physical, world through a pair of smoke-coloured spectacles.

Even the Archdeaconess, however, had her little stock of human vanities and foibles. Persons of title, though they exist in adequate number on the British mainland, are scarce and prized, like the pink flowering hydrangea, on these smaller islets. With the rectors' wives from half a dozen country parishes, sitting around, neglected, it was a distinctly soothing sensation for good Madame Corbie's unworldly heart to have Lord Rex Basire, the fifth son of a very impoverished duke, in attendance upon her.

‘A second cup of tea? Why, Lord Rex and dear Linda were certainly conspiring to

spoil us all! And might she, the Archdeaconess, ask if there was such a thing to be had as a macaroon?’

‘Too late, Madame Corbie! Lost your chance,’ cried Lord Rex. ‘That young limb, Rahnee, has been beforehand with you. I saw her devouring the last three macaroons at a gulp just as Linda sent me off with your tea.’

Lord Rex was forced to shout these words into Madame Corbie’s ear, for the band of the Maltshire Royals were playing a forcible, much kettle-drummed polka, not twenty feet distant, so his attentions, even to the obtuse perceptions of country rectors’ wives, must be unmistakably marked.

‘Sadly unwholesome diet, to be sure. But poor Linda Thorne is so indiscreet in minor matters. You agree with me, do you not, Lord Rex? Nothing more sadly indigestible for a young child’s stomach than macaroons?’

Lord Rex Basire heard her not. It may be doubted whether Lord Rex heard the horns and kettle-drums as they echoed resonantly from the

Arsenal walls. He was absorbed in the vision of a distant lovely head, poised flower-like on a white throat, its waves of amber hair set off against the soft velvet of a Rubens hat. No other interest existed on our planet at that moment for Lord Rex Basire.

He was a man who from his birth upward had followed the desire of the hour, for evil or for good ; mainly, not for good. His desire now was to become acquainted with the exquisitely pretty girl whom his eyes pursued. Bluntly abandoning the question (from a physiological side) of macaroons, he addressed himself to the Archdeaconess. Did Madame Corbie—the polka by now had stopped, Lord Rex could ask his question without a shout—did Madame Corbie know the name of the girl who was walking with Marjorie Bartrand of Tintajeux ? ‘Golden-haired girl—straight features, the loveliest complexion in the world,’ added Lord Rex, with the frankness of a momentarily real feeling.

‘It will be my husband’s cousin once re-

moved, Ella Corbie of La Hauterive,' observed Madame Corbie, blandly. 'The Hauterive yellow roses are fine this year. I have not a word to say against their "Celine Forestier." But in my poor opinion the Archdeacon's "Maréchal Niel" ought to have taken the prize. Yes, yes,'—Madame Corbie gazed through her smoked spectacles into the perspective of history—'Ella Corbie is still nice looking. I remember her, dressed for her first evening party more than a dozen years ago, and now——'

'My dear Madame Corbie! I beg a thousand pardons, your cup is empty—allow me to set it down,' interrupted Lord Rex Basire.

For at this precise moment the perfect features, the lovely complexion, were again setting towards him in the crowd.

But Madame Corbie, the head of our local society, rose to the occasion, and to her feet.

'Let me have a good look, Lord Rex, and if it is my cousin Ella, I will introduce you to her. A young lady walking, you say, with

Marjorie Bartrand? That is certainly most unlike Ella! The Hauterive family keep so exclusively to themselves. Still——'

'There they are—coming this way, by Jove!' cried Lord Rex breathlessly. 'You see the girl I mean? Splendid girl in black—lace ruffle—a red rose lying on her hair?'

Madame Corbie looked through her smoke-coloured glasses straight. Then she looked through her smoke-coloured glasses obliquely edgewise. Then she pushed them high away on her ample forehead, and gazed stoically upward in the broad light of the merry June day.

'The person,' she pronounced, with awful solemnity, 'who is walking with Marjorie Bartrand of Tintajeux *does not belong to this island.*'

And so speaking, and with the folds of her satin doing credit to the price paid for them, Madame Corbie there, in full presence of the inferior clergy's wives, sat down.

'Ah! I thought not. Thought I had never seen such a pretty woman in the place,' observed

Lord Rex, addressing his own consciousness, rather than the ill-pleased ears of the Arch-deaconess. 'What are the odds I don't get properly introduced and properly snubbed before another quarter of an hour is over!'

As a preliminary step, Lord Rex rushed back to the refreshment tent, Madame Corbie's tea-cup his ostensible excuse. He threw himself on Linda Thorne's ambiguous sympathy.

'Mrs. Thorne, you know all about every one, by fine natural discernment. I've heard you say so a hundred times. Who is this wonderful girl in black that Marjorie Bartrand is walking about with?'

A suppressed smile lurked round Linda Thorne's thin lips.

'Let us give Mr. Arbuthnot the task of learning her pedigree. It is an act of charity, always, to find work for idle men. Mr. Arbuthnot,' she turned to Gaston, 'I want you to find out something for the peace of Lord Rex Basire's mind and of my own existence. Who is this wonderful girl in black who is walking

about the Arsenal grounds with Marjorie Bartrand?’

‘If I were of a brave disposition I would go myself,’ said Lord Rex, when Gaston had sauntered placidly off on his mission. ‘But I am not. I am a coward, down to the ground. Peace at any price is my motto, politically and otherwise. To-day I am feeling more than usually nervous—not half “go” enough in me to stand up under one of Marjorie Bartrand’s snubbings.’

‘I cannot say your modesty makes itself known to the world by outward and visible signs.’

‘Modesty—no! I understand you, madam. A man may have forward manners but a faint heart.’

Lord Rex Basire’s arm, in justice let it be spoken, got a bullet through it in hot warfare. This dandified boy was in the thick of more than one African fight when clouds gathered dark above the English colours, was all but drowned on a never-to-be-forgotten night while

attempting to carry succour to the wounded, left with their solitary gallant surgeon, on an abandoned position.

‘I tried once, at a militia review or something, to talk to Marjorie, just in the usual way one talks, not without success you know, to girls of her age.’

‘And the result was?’ asked Linda.

‘She looked at me coolly—grand Spanish eyes of hers those are, bar the temper in them! “You are fresh from Eton, are you not?” she observed. I confessed that Eton had known me in my youth. “Talk about Eton, then,” struck out Miss Bartrand, straight from the shoulder. “Talk about cricket, football, boating, Latin grammar, if you learnt any. I will not,” with a murderous flash from her big eyes, “listen to foolishness from any man.”’

By the time Lord Rex finished this characteristic anecdote, Gaston Arbuthnot, with his usual expression of genial impenetrability, had sauntered back to the refreshment tent. Picking up Rahnee, he asked the child what ailed her?

For Rahnee's face, sickly at all times, wore a look and hue forlornly out of keeping with the bravery of her attire.

'What in the world has befallen the infant, Mrs. Thorne? Her complexion is of the lively arsenic green the doctors forbid us to use in wall papers.'

'Rahnee! mamma's own darling pet, what is the matter?' cried Linda, suddenly recalled to the fact of her darling's existence.

'Me eat matazooks. Bad matazooks!' whimpered Rahnee, with the tender conscience, the quick physical repentance of her age.

'That is a wise little Rahnee,' said Gaston Arbuthnot, kissing her. 'Right morality. Pitch into our pleasures the moment our pleasures begin to pitch into us.'

'Have you seen her?' exclaimed Lord Rex. 'This kind of trifling, remember, may be fun to all of you. It's stretched high above a joke to me. A tall fair girl, dressed in black——'

'With a crimson rose in her hair,' added

Linda, 'and walking with Marjorie Bartrand of Tintajoux.'

'Well, yes,' Gaston admitted in the lapses of whispered consolation to poor Rahnee, 'I have seen her.'

'And who is she?' exclaimed Linda Thorne. 'I am almost as curious as Lord Rex. Have you discovered this new Dulcinea's name?'

'Her name is Dinah Arbuthnot,' replied Gaston cheerfully. 'Yes, Mrs. Thorne, incredulous though I know you feel, the wonderful girl in black, and who is walking with Miss Bartrand of Tintajoux, is—my wife.'

Lord Rex sank in an attitude of despair, half mock, half genuine, upon the nearest bench.

CHAPTER XIV.

BROUGHT UP BY THE JESUITS.

DINAH ARBUTHNOT had been more than woman could she have run the gauntlet of this Guernsey rose-show unconscious of her success.

But admiration to Dinah was no new thing. As a girl she never went through that chrysalis or ugly-duckling stage, the remembrance of which to many women puts an edge on after triumphs. Heads were turning after her to-day, she saw, just as heads used to turn when she was a baby toddling along the Devonshire lanes, or a slim maid walking in the procession of 'young ladies' from Tiverton boarding school. She had known since she knew anything that she was beautiful, and rated beauty at a pathetically low standard.

Thanks to roseleaf tint or well-cut features, a sweetheart's fancy can easily be won. Who should say that cleverness, knowledge of the world, tact, are not the solid gifts that bring happiness, the qualities that might chain a husband—wearied, say, after modelling from hired beauty—to his own fireside?

‘If you do not object, Miss Bartrand, I would like to find some place where we could rest away from the crowd a little.’ Bent upon displaying their friendship before the Sarnian world, Marjorie had by this time paraded her companion bravely throughout the length and breadth of the Arsenal. ‘My husband has seen me. He is in the tent near the entrance, the tent where Mrs. Thorne is serving refreshments. As Mr. Arbuthnot does not come forward to meet us, I am afraid he is displeased.’

‘Displeased? That is a great idea,’ cried headstrong Marjorie. ‘Put all the blame on me. I think I shall be strong enough to bear the brunt of Mr. Arbuthnot’s wrath if I rest myself well, first.’

They succeeded in finding a bench, withdrawn somewhat from the crowd, yet within sight of the stall at which Linda presided. Here Dinah could pluck up her drooping courage, while Marjorie communed scornfully in her heart as to the pitiful weakness of married women in general, and of this most neglected, most mistaken married woman in particular. Their seclusion lasted for two or three minutes only. Then a blush started up into Dinah's cheek, vivid, bashful, such as a girl's face might wear on catching sight unexpectedly of her lover, for she saw Gaston approaching. At his side was a very dandily dressed, sun-tanned youth, his arm in a sling; a youth whom as yet Dinah Arbuthnot knew not.

‘He is coming! Miss Bartrand, I look to you to smooth things over. Just say you pressed me to come to the show, and I refused at first, and——’

‘I will say everything that can decently be compressed into one act of contrition.’ Mar-

jorie's tone was fraught with ironical seriousness. 'But your eyes are better than mine, Mrs. Arbuthnot. A guilty conscience perhaps sharpens the external senses. I am looking with the best of my seeing power over the whole Arsenal. I see no Mr. Arbuthnot.'

'Then his companion must stand in the way, the light-haired gentleman with a plain-like reddish face,' whispered Dinah, 'and who wears his left arm in a sling.'

'That is our popular hero, Lord Rex Basire, newly returned from South African fighting, and as proud of his gunshot wound as a foolish girl might be of her first conquest.'

'Well, and there is my husband walking with him.'

'Your husband! Mrs. Arbuthnot?'

Marjorie's world was reeling. A possibility—she knew not of what—a wild and passionate hope trembled on the outside edge of her thoughts.

'Perhaps I am not a fair judge,' murmured Dinah, the two young men having been arrested

on their road by that incorrigible button-seizer, Doctor Thorne, 'but, to my mind, Gaston must always be the most noticeable man in any company he enters, no matter how high that company may be.'

'Gaston?'

Marjorie Bartrand was in a state of such bewilderment that the echoing of Dinah Arbuthnot's words seemed about as great originality in the way of speech as she was mistress of.

'Geoffrey must have sounded my husband's praises to you pretty often. That is a right good point of poor Geff's, his love and admiration for Gaston. At Cambridge he was called the handsome American. I know it,' said Dinah, with earnestness which became those sweet lips of hers mightily, 'because Aunt Susan had relations in the town, on Market Hill, you know. Before my marriage we used to hear something flattering of Gaston every day. It is the same in London. The tailors will give him any credit. I believe they would

make his coats gratis so long as they got his promise to wear them.'

'And Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot?' It cost Marjorie no small effort just then to force Geff's name from her lips. 'What relationship is there between him and you?'

'Geoffrey is our first cousin. His father and my husband's died, both of them, when their children were young. Gaston has always been Geoffrey's good genius.' In saying this Dinah believed herself to be enunciating truth, clear as crystal. 'They did not meet as boys. Geoffrey spent his young years in a gloomy city school. My husband was brought up—you can tell it, they say, by his accent—in Paris. When they came together in Cambridge nothing could be more different than their positions. Poor Geff, a scholar at John's, was forced to work without amusements, almost without friends, for his Tripos, while Gaston —'

'Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot had livelier things than work to think about,' suggested Marjorie, as Gaston's wife paused.

‘He was clever enough to come out first in any Tripos he had read for. But his friends would not let him read. He was sought after, popular,’ said Dinah, with a sigh, ‘just as you see him now. However, that made no difference for Geff. Gaston treated him like a younger brother always. He does so now. I have grown, myself, to think of Geoffrey as of a brother.’

She stopped short, for Gaston Arbuthnot and Lord Rex Basire were now within hearing distance; Doctor Thorne, adhesive as goose-grass, addressing them by turns as he followed, with his nimble limp, in their steps.

‘Yes, Mr. Arbuthnot, you must grant me my postulate.’ Doctor Thorne packed up all of nature or of books—chiefly of books—that came within his reach in little neatly labelled comprehensible forms, dilettante demonstrations of the universe ready for his own daily use and the misery of his fellows. ‘Grant, as a postulate, that the magnitudes we call molecules are realities, and the rest follows as a necessary de-

duction. Let us look around us at this moment. Evolution teaches us that these bright blooms we behold actually come into being through the colour-sense of insects ; and, and——Lord Rex Basire ! you, I am sure, are fascinated by the subject !’

Lord Rex had not heard a syllable. Breaking away from Doctor Thorne, Lord Rex stood still, his eyes pointedly avoiding Dinah’s face. Gaston, meanwhile, his hat held low, after the fashion of Broadway or the Boulevards, was saluting the two ladies, making Marjorie Bartrand’s acquaintance, and jesting amicably with Dinah as to the march she had stolen upon himself and an unexpectant Sarnian world.

When two or three minutes had passed, Lord Rex gave evidence of his presence. Coming forward, he delivered a set little compliment to Marjorie Bartrand on the Seigneur’s roses. It was a source of agreeable satisfaction to Lord Rex Basire that the ‘Duc de Rohan’ should have taken a first prize. He would like——

‘The Seigneur’s dark roses have taken a prize every June show for the last quarter of a century,’ Marjorie interrupted him cruelly. ‘When once we islanders, flower-show judges included, get into a safe groove, we keep there.’

‘What an improving place Guernsey must be to live in!’ Gaston Arbuthnot remarked. ‘I have been trying vainly through the best years of my life to keep in safe grooves.’

‘To *keep* in safe grooves!’ repeated Marjorie, with rather stinging emphasis. ‘You would need to get into them first, would you not?’

‘You are severe, Miss Bartrand.’ Gaston came over to the girl’s side. ‘And I like it. Severity gives me a new sensation. Now, I am going to ask a favour which I can tell beforehand you will grant. I want you to show me these conquering Tintajeux roses. Tintajeux is not an unknown name to us.’

Gaston added this last clause in a lower key, then watched to note how much the colour would vary on her ever-varying face.

Under any other circumstances than the present ones Marjorie would, I think, have selected Gaston Arbuthnot as the type of human creature least to be encouraged under heaven. Was he not obtrusively good-looking, a popularity man, a dandy for whom Bond Street tailors would be content, as a flesh-and-blood block, a living advertisement, to stitch gratis? Was he not a coolly neglectful husband, a pleasure-seeker, a frequenter of the afternoon teas of frivolous, attention-loving women?

But in her rush of joyous surprise, of contradictory relief, in her gratitude to him for not being Geoffrey, the girl was ready to extend a hand of hearty friendship to Dinah's husband—during the first half hour of their acquaintance, at all events.

'You wish to see the Tintajoux roses? Come, then, and let me play show-woman. Unfortunately,' Marjorie added, 'I don't know in which quarter of the globe the "Duc de Rohan" lives.'

‘I believe I can guide you. I know the whereabouts of every stall in the Arsenal.’

And Lord Rex neatly affixed himself to the party as Marjorie and Dinah rose.

Dinah’s breath came short. She knew instinctively how the eyes of this pale-haired, sun-burnt youth avoided her face, and in that avoidance read the fact of his admiration. She divined that Lord Rex’s intention was to walk at her side. She foresaw, with terror, the necessity of conversation.

Gaston Arbuthnot gave his wife a quick, comprehensive look—Lord Chesterfield embodied in a glance! Then he went through a brief, informal word of introduction.

‘Lord Rex Basire, my wife. I fancied, Dinah, that you and Basire had met already. Now, Miss Bartrand, let us make an exploring tour of the Arsenal. We shall reach the Seigneur’s dark roses, sooner or later. I look to you,’ Gaston added, ‘for enlightenment as to some of the human elements of the show.’

Marjorie’s mood was abundantly bright;

the 'enlightenment' was not slow of coming. Her prattle, with its brisk bitterish flavour, amused Gaston as he would have thought it impossible to be amused by any classico-mathematical girl extant. As they passed the bench that still supported Madame the Archdeaconess's sacerdotal weight, Marjorie broke into a laugh—that hearty, human, unmistakable laugh of hers. For Doctor Thorne stood beside the great female pillar of the Church, delivering an oration in his most verbose little manner, to which not only the Archdeaconess, but the wives of the inferior clergy, listened with respect. And Marjorie's quick ear had caught his text.

'One ought not to laugh at our betters, Mr. Arbuthnot, ought one?'

Asking this, Marjorie looked gravely up in Gaston's face.

'It is so written in the copy-books, Miss Bartrand. For my part, I think the greatest good a man ever does his fellows is when he furnishes them, consciously or unconsciously, with materials for farce.'

‘ At least, one should not laugh loud enough to be heard ? ’

‘ I think you ought to laugh very often, and loud enough for all the world to hear,’ replied Gaston.

‘ Doctor Thorne is too much for me ; I have an old “ Sandford and Merton ” among my books, and when I hear him talk, I think of Mr. Barlow moralising at Tommy. Mr. Barlow turned scientist. “ Grant as a postulate that the magnitudes we call molecules are realities ” “ Evolution teaches us that these bright blooms ” &c. Dr. Thorne’s flower-show speech ! We had it last autumn with the dahlias. We had it in the spring with the tulips. I heard him addressing it just now to that poor small boy, Lord Rex. Mrs. Corbie is orthodox to the core. I suppose he will make a big jump, as they do over the words in plays, when he gets to anything so brimstonny as “ evolution.” ’

The crowd, as it happened, was setting in the direction of the Tintajoux roses. By the

time Gaston and Marjorie had made their way into front places before the stand, they discovered that Dinah and Lord Rex Basire had parted company from them in the crowd.

‘I brought Mrs. Arbuthnot here. It was through my persuasion she laid down her cross-stitch,’ cried Marjorie, ‘and now we have let her fall victim to Lord Rex. How wearied she will be of him.’

‘I am not so sure of that. My wife has the old-fashioned weaknesses of the sex. The sight of a wounded soldier is dear to her. All women, at heart, are thoroughgoing Jingoites.’

‘I am not ! I am an ultra, red-hot Radical,’ exclaimed Marjorie. ‘As to Lord Rex—I believe his wound was well long ago. He wears his arm in a sling to get up sympathy.’

‘It will secure Mrs. Arbuthnot’s,’ said Gaston. Then : ‘What a world of good it will do my wife to have been here,’ he added warmly. ‘That is just what poor Dinah needs, to come out more, mix more with her fellow-creatures, brighten up her ideas ; to lay down her cross-

stitch, in short. That hits the nail on the head—to lay down her cross-stitch! It was charming of you to call on us, Miss Bartrand! I take it for granted, you see, that you have called. You heard of our existence probably from Geff?’

‘I heard from Mr. Geoffrey that Mrs. Arbuthnot was staying at Miller’s Hotel.’

But Marjorie’s voice faltered. Her soul clothed itself in sackcloth and ashes as she thought of her own error, of the *generous, delicate*, motives which had prompted her—Pharisee that she was!—to call on Dinah.

‘Whatever Geff does comes to good. He cannot take a mile-long walk without some man or woman being the better for it. Geff has a kind of genius for bringing about the welfare of other people.’

At the mention of Geoffrey, every artificial trace left Gaston’s manner. The best of the man showed always, no matter how trifling the occasion, in the honest regard he bore his cousin.

‘Now, look, Miss Bartrand, at the way Geff is spending his time in this island!’

Where Marjorie had suspected him of easy-going callousness, of philandering in the train of idle fine ladies, of singing French songs, of putting himself on the social and intellectual plane of a Major Tredennis.

‘Six hours a week must, I own, be grudged to him, the hours he spends at Tintajeux Manoir.’

‘Spare yourself the trouble of being polite, Mr. Arbuthnot. If you knew how I detest politeness!’

‘But remember all his other hours.’ The art of thought-reading was certainly to be reckoned among Gaston’s accomplishments. Within ten minutes of his introduction to this little classico-mathematical girl, behold him discoursing with cunning naturalness on the subject likeliest to interest her in the world—Geff’s virtues! ‘Remember how his days, often his nights, are really passed.’

‘Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot reads, does he not?’

Marjorie gazed into the heart of a glorious Duc de Rohan with interest.

‘Geoffrey reads, as I,’ said Gaston, passing into a lighter strain, ‘meant to read once. You look sceptical, Miss Bartrand! There was a time when I had bookish ambition. Yes, I talked, like many a fool before me, of going in for two Triposes, and left Cambridge without a degree. But Geff has a gigantic physique, a real hunger for hard work. He simply does not know the meaning of taking a holiday.’

As they chatted, Gaston’s eyes dwelt with artistic satisfaction on the girl’s slender figure and hands, on the chiselled Southern face overkissed by sea and sun for some English tastes, but pure, fresh, as the wine-dark roses over which she bent.

‘I am a sculptor by trade,’ he went on. ‘It might be truer to say a poor manufacturer of statuettes for the London market. Geff has told you how we get our daily bread, has he not?’

‘My tutor speaks of little—beyond my reading,’ stammered Marjorie, still without meeting the penetrating glance of Gaston Arbuthnot.

‘Well, even after work as light as mine, I find,’ said Gaston, with a clear conscience, ‘that amusement, varied in kind and ample of quantity, is needful. The heartiness of one’s work seems determined to a nicety by the heartiness of one’s play. Geoffrey takes his recreation just now in the wards of the Guernsey hospital. There was a bad quarry accident the day after our arrival here——’

‘I know,’ exclaimed Marjorie, paling. ‘The worst accident we have ever had at St. Sampson’s.’

‘Geoffrey, I need not say, went to the fore as a volunteer. Between the poor lads in hospital, and those who lie, still, in the houses to which they were carried from the quarry, his hands are full. That is the way Geff recreates himself.’

For a good many seconds Marjorie was

speechless. Could it be that conscious weakness—weakness in her, a Bartrand—hindered the girl from trusting her own voice? Then, giving Gaston her profile still, she turned brusquely aside from the Tintajoux roses and from the discussion of Geoffrey's qualities. She remembered her grandfather's dinner-hour. The sun was getting low. It would be only human to search for Mrs. Arbuthnot, and deliver her out of the hands of Lord Rex.

'We shall find them, perfectly happy, and eating ices,' said Gaston. 'Dinah's is not such a critical spirit as yours, Miss Bartrand. Let us bend our steps to the refreshment tent.'

Dinah and Lord Rex were all this time advancing, haltingly, monosyllabically, towards acquaintanceship. Gaston's happy many-sidedness, his power of adapting himself, without effort, to the tastes and moods of others, were gifts in no manner shared by Lord Rex Basire. Dinah's intelligence differed about as widely

from Marjorie Bartrand's as does placid English moonlight from a flash of tropical lightning.

Thus,—starting, as a cleverer man might do, along beaten tracks, the first remark made by Lord Rex was meteorological :

‘ Splendid day this, isn’t it, for a rose-show ? ’

‘ Certainly.’

The chilling assent was not spoken for some seconds, Dinah’s education having failed to inform her that the smallest platitude uttered by men and women when they meet in the world needs instant answer.

‘ As a rule, you see, one gets beastly weather for this sort of thing.’

Silence.

‘ Festive gatherings, I mean, *und so weiter*. Speech-day at Eton was always the wettest day of the three hundred and sixty-five.’

‘ Was it indeed, Lord Rex Basire ? ’

Dinah’s gentle nature prompted her to be civil to all created beings. She would be civil, kindly even, to this plain and sun-scorched boy

who had elected to walk beside her, and whose eyes took so many covert glances of admiration at her face. In the heart of Eve's simplest daughter were such glances, one short quarter of an hour after introduction, ever registered as crime? Not only would Dinah be civil,—knowing little of titles, and less as to their modes of application, she would fain give Lord Rex Basire the fullest benefit of his.

He paused, and doing so looked with a straighter gaze than heretofore at Gaston Arbuthnot's wife. She was surpassingly beautiful, fairer than any woman he had seen with his fleshly eyes or dreamed about in such soul as he possessed. Was she stupid? Not one whit for the higher feminine intelligence or the higher feminine culture did Lord Rex care. In society he held it Woman's duty to supply him, Rex Basire, with straw for his conversational brick-making; hooks and eyes, don't you know! gleanings from the comic papers, hints at politics, easy openings for unsentimental sentiment. A distinctly stupid woman frightened him. 'Makes

one feel like being on one's legs for a speech,' Lord Rex Basire would say.

'You are looking forward to a long stay in the island, I *hope*, Mrs. Arbuthnot.'

At the italicised verb, Dinah's eyes turned on her companion with a vague distrust. Then she changed colour. A rose-flush, vivid as sunset on snow, overspread her face. For she thought of Gaston.

'If you are a friend of my husband's, I can understand your wishing to keep us here.'

There was a smile on her lips. The stiffness of her manner began visibly to relax.

Lord Rex for a moment was taken aback. Then he plucked up heart of grace. To see a married woman blush like a schoolgirl at the mention of her husband's name was a new and puzzling spectacle to him. He could scarcely flatter his vanity that he, personally, was receiving encouragement. Still, Dinah had smiled. And with the burthen of conversation-making resting heavily on him, he was glad enough to follow any cue that might present itself.

‘Friend? I should think so! Best fellow in the world, Arbuthnot—and a man of genius, too; good-all-round sort of man. Never heard a Briton sing French songs as he does. Rather proud of my own accent.’ As Lord Rex progressed in confidence, his speech grew more and more elliptic. ‘Sent to Paris in my infancy. Brought up by the Jesuits—there were Jesuits in those days, you know—till I went to Eton. But Arbuthnot puts me in the shade, *ra-ther*.’

‘Your lordship was brought up by the Jesuits!’

Side by side with many wholesomer qualities, Dinah had inherited not a few of her yeoman forefathers’ prejudices. At the word ‘Jesuit,’ she regarded Lord Rex with an interest that had in it almost the tenderer element of pity.

‘I was. You look doubtful, you don’t think the fathers could give one such a Parisian roll of the “r” as your husband’s?’

‘Of that I’m ignorant, my lord. I am no

French scholar. I thought of the Jesuits' fearful undermined dealings.' Dinah gave a half shudder in the warm sunshine. 'I thought of the doctrines they must have instilled into you.'

Underminded! From what sect or denomination could Arbuthnot have taken his handsome wife? That Dinah was a rustic 'mixed up with the great bucolic interests,' Lord Rex felt certain. The Devonshire burr, the staid, shy, village manner betrayed her. What were her tenets? What sort of conscience had she? A Puritanical conscience, of course, but of what shade, what dimensions?

He harked warily back upon the safe subject of Gaston's songs.

'Arbuthnot was singing to us magnificently last night. He was in his best form. Faure, himself, could never have given "A vingt ans" in grander style. And then he was so well accompanied. The accompaniment is half the battle in "A vingt ans."'

Gaston Arbuthnot, it should be explained, dined on the preceding night at the mess of the

Maltshire Royals. He had dined at mess often of late, and on each occasion Dinah's heart felt that it had got a reprieve. Dinah believed that dining at the mess of the Maltshire Royals meant, for one evening at least, seeing nothing of The Bungalow, and of Doctor and Mrs. Thorne.

‘You have good musicians among you, no doubt. I know,’ she observed, remembering long and not successful practising of her own, ‘that the accompaniment of this song is hard. But it has become the fashion for young men to play the piano lately.’

‘We can most of us get through a polka, played with one finger, or Malbrook. When I am alone,’ said Lord Rex, ‘I execute the Marseillaise, with chords. No man in the regiment could play a true accompaniment to “A. vingt ans.”’

‘No? My husband played it for himself, then?’ asked Dinah, unaccountably persistent.

‘Not a bit of it! A singer never sings his best unless he stand, head up, chest expanded.

Lord Rex dramatised the operatic attitude as they walked. 'Mrs. Thorne accompanied Arbuthnot—deliciously, as she always does.'

It was seldom Dinah's policy to discover her feelings by speech. So much worldly wisdom she had learnt, through most unworldly forbearance towards Gaston. Her complexion showed one of its over-quick changes, her mouth fell. But she spoke not. That there must be deviation from truth somewhere, she divined, with a bitter personal sense of humiliation. But where? She shrank from the possible answer to this question.

A good-humoured epitome of the dinner-party had been given by Gaston, over this morning's breakfast-table, for her own and Geoffrey's benefit. 'The usual guest-night at mess. Curious how precisely alike all mess dinners are. The Engineer Colonel's never finished commencement, "When we were in the lines before Sebastopol;" the Major's tiger-slaying adventures in Bengal; the elderly Captain's diatribes against Liberal Governments

and enforced retirements, "A man in the very prime—no, sir, a man before he is in the prime of life put on the shelf." And the Irishman's story. And the subaltern's witticisms.' Gaston, I say, had enlivened the breakfast-table with his lively putting together of these oft-used materials. He had made no reference to the singing of French songs, or to Linda Thorne.

Then Lord Rex Basire's memory must be at fault.

'You cannot mean last night. You must be thinking of some former time. Mr. Arbuthnot dined with you at mess yesterday.'

'Of course he did. After dinner we adjourned—we, the favoured few—as our manner is, to The Bungalow.'

'Where Mrs. Thorne played accompaniments for Gaston.'

Dinah made the observation with mechanical self-control, hardly knowing what cold repetition of words this was that escaped her.

'Yes; we had quite a chamber concert. A

lot of rehearsing that accompanying business seems to want! Hardly ever drop in at The Bungalow of an afternoon without finding them at the piano.'

Dinah knew a moment's cruel pain. There was a proud, hurt expression on her face. She stopped short, involuntarily. Then: 'It would take much rehearsal,' she said, 'before I should play well enough to accompany Mr. Arbuthnot in public. But Mrs. Thorne seems clever nearly in everything. I wish I had her talents.'

And she resumed her walk, and began to speak—the village shyness thawing fast away—about the flowers, and the music and the people.

It became clear as daylight to Lord Rex Basire that his society was duly valued.

CHAPTER XV.

A LOVE-LETTER.

WHEN Gaston and Marjorie approached the refreshment stall they saw a picture which many a genre artist, in ink or oils, might have been glad to study.

For there outside the tent, stood Dinah Arbuthnot, fair and flushed. She and Lord Rex were eating ices, as Gaston, the materialist, predicted. The western light shone on Dinah's bright hair. It touched the rose she wore, and the outline of her lips and chin. Lord Rex, dutifully attentive, held her sunshade. An Archdeaconess with surroundings of inferior female clergy loomed large on the horizon. Nearer at hand was Linda Thorne, patiently enduring long stories of the tiger-slaying

Major's, while her eyes and ears were elsewhere. Sarnian society, generally, in dubious groups of twos and threes, looked on. It was Dinah's first step across the border of a new world.

Gaston Arbuthnot seized the points of the situation at a glance. He played the part that fell to him with acumen. Towards Dinah his manner was simply irreproachable. So thought Marjorie, no over-lenient judge ; so, from afar, thought Linda Thorne. It were premature to hint at any forecasting of storm in Dinah's own hot heart ! He insisted upon supporting his wife's plate while she finished her ice. He contrived to bring her and Linda so far into friendly juxtaposition that at parting a chilly handshake was exchanged between these ladies. But he also was true to his colours. He had come to the rose-show in Mrs. Thorne's society ; in her society he remained. The last glimpse Marjorie got of her new friends revealed a perspective of Linda with sprightly energy pointing out distant roses to Mr. Arbuthnot, while

Dinah walked slowly homeward from the Arsenal gates, Lord Rex at her side.

Had the afternoon been one of unmixed good? Had her interference with the Arbuthnot trio brought about good at all? Marjorie asked herself these questions as she urged her ponies to a gallop along the Tintajoux high road. That she had discovered a foolish error appositely, might be matter for congratulation so far as pride went! Had she performed a very generous or delicate action in bringing untaught Dinah from her cross-stitch, pushing her into the glare of public notice, obliging her to tolerate the attention of a man like Rex Basire? If, unprompted by the Bartrand thirst for governing, she had left destiny to itself, had been content, as in old times, to help in the hayfield, or the dairy at home, might not her day's work have been fruitfuller?

Dinner had waited long when she reached Tintajoux, and the Seigneur was in the disposition most dreaded of Marjorie throughout the meal. He talked more than his custom, dis-

played a genial and grandpaternal interest in her doings at the Arsenal. Tintajoux had taken a first prize, of course. And how did the Duc de Rohan look among the baser herd? Was he well placed? In sun or in shadow? Marjorie, the Seigneur *supposed*, had scarce found time, among her numerous friends, to give a glance that way.

‘I looked more at our roses than at any in the show,’ said Marjorie truthfully. Were not her eyes fixed downcast on the Duc de Rohan, when Gaston Arbuthnot talked to her of Geff? ‘Would you believe, sir, that the Hauterive Corbies have taken a prize? I think the Archdeaconess would sooner have been cut out by any farmer in the island than by her husband’s cousin.’

‘No need to tell me the local tittle-tattle. On that head Cassandra Tighe has been a more than sufficient oracle. By-the-by, witch,’ with the memory of over-boiled fish strong upon him the Seigneur turned his piercing old gaze towards his granddaughter, ‘Cassandra informs

me that Mrs. Arbuthnot is an extraordinarily pretty woman ; good, too, as she is pretty. Your tutor shows poor taste in dancing attendance on anything so vapidly commonplace as Doctor Thorne's Indian wife.'

Marjorie Bartrand who, three weeks ago, had never changed colour before mortal, was conscious, at this moment, of blushing furiously before the Reverend Andros. Still more did she quail under the eyes of Sylvestre, who stood, in his faded puce and silver, listening, with the unabashed frankness that characterises servants of his age and nation, to their talk. From her grandfather all she need fear was a little searching banter, directed towards herself. Let the dramatic instincts of Sylvestre be aroused, and he was capable of waylaying Geoffrey Arbuthnot—yes, and of inviting confidence respecting the most intimate family concerns at Geff's next visit. It needs personal acquaintance with a Frenchman of Sylvestre's type to realise how the passion for scandalettes, smouldering through long years of solitude and disuse,

would be ready at the first handful of fuel supplied to break forth anew !

‘ Doctor and Mrs. Thorne were at the rose-show. The proceeds of the refreshment stall go, this June, to some sort of charity, so Mrs. Thorne, of course, presided there. But Mrs. Thorne is one of the people I never can find two words to say to.’

‘ Our solemn-eyed Cantab finds a great many more than two words, it would appear. Let me help you to a merry-thought, witch. You have nothing but bones on your plate.’

Marjorie picked her merry-thought, as she finished her dinner, in silence. Over dessert, however,—Sylvestre’s inquisitive face fairly vanished from the scene—she plucked up courage and spoke :

‘ We have been making nimble but ridiculous conjectures, sir. One could not well speak of this before Sylvestre. Miss Tighe made sure of the Arbuthnot family history, you know, and——’

‘Avoid expletives. I know nothing, until it is your pleasure to inform my ignorance.’

‘I mean Cassandra believed, from whispers she heard in Petersport, that Mrs. Arbuthnot was kept too much in the background. It would be a right and kindly thing, we thought, for me to call on her, and so—and so——’

‘Take your time, Marjorie; slur over nothing. We have a long evening before us.’

‘Well, sir,’ desperately, ‘I called. And our solemn-eyed Cantab is not a married man at all. The name of the Mr. Arbuthnot who dances attend . . . who visits at Dr. Thorne’s house, is Gaston. He is a cousin of Geff’s. I—I mean of my tutor’s.’

The Seigneur looked deliberately at his granddaughter’s face. Then, as though politely reluctant to take further notice of her embarrassment, he lifted his gaze to a full-length portrait in pastels, of some bewigged and powdered Bartrand on the opposite wall.

‘And why should we not speak of Miss Tighe’s mistake, of Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot’s

celibacy, before Sylvestre? Remember the rascal's Gallican blood—Sylvestre requires an occasional bit of comedy more than any of us. And so you have been acting a charade, my love, solemn-eyed tutor and all. A very pretty charade, upon my word!’

The Reverend Andros Bartrand laughed drily. It was about the first time on record that he had addressed his granddaughter as ‘my love,’ and Marjorie was prompt to recognise latent sarcasm under the endearment. How terrible to reach old age, thought the child of seventeen—to read, to think, and yet outlive the power of loving; intellect surviving heart by many a year, as bodily strength in the end must survive all. What had she ever been to him but a plaything! From the hour she arrived at Tintajoux with her tempers, her four-year-old tongue, her foreign ways, the necessity of keeping a kitten to gambol before the Seigneur's study fire had possibly been done away with. Just that! She had diverted him. At the present day she might be picturesque, shed the

pleasing charm of youth upon his lawn and dinner-table. She understood the arrangement of his books. She could dust his library to admiration. And she was not afraid of him! (Marjorie omitted this, the leading clause, from her mental summing-up of personal virtues.) She was not afraid of him! When did fearlessness fail of carrying weight with a cold, strong nature like the Seigneur's? Though her colour went and came, though her lips quivered under his irony, the girl was not afraid of him at this moment.

‘I might have known, sir, that if I was distressed it would furnish you with amusement. That is our amiable Bartrand spirit, our way of showing sympathy with others.’

‘Distressed? You astonish me. Distressed at finding that an intelligent, studious young man is in possession of his freedom? The charade, we may almost call it the Arbuthnot drama, grows mightily puzzling to me, a spectator. Let our worthy Cantab be bachelor or Benedict. What concern is it of ours?’

Marjorie rose from the table, with difficulty choking back her tears. 'I love gossip as little as any one,' she said coldly. 'You introduced the Arbuthnots' name, sir, so I chose to mention that the Thornes' friend and my tutor are two distinct persons. And I have no interest in Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot's concerns! And if a drama is being acted, let me tell you, grandpapa, that I, for one, play no part in it. Like yourself, I am a spectator only.'

Her tone was high, but when she reached the schoolroom—friendly sanctuary in many a dumb pain of her childhood—when she looked at the ink-stained desk, the piles of books, the window through which the China roses peeped, her humour changed. Marjorie stood a self-convicted impostor in her own sight. For she knew that she was not a spectator only in the Arbuthnot drama, that she was not unmoved by the discovery of Geoffrey's freedom. 'Bachelor or Benedict, what concern is it of ours?' She knew, also, that under the Seigneur's irony

lurked wholesome truth. Pluming herself on her own strength, on the Bartrand immunity from vulgar human error, she had drifted into a position from which the pride of any simple village maiden must recoil. She remembered her airs of easy patronage towards Geoffrey, from the first evening when he walked out to Tintajeux on approval, until this morning. What could she have seemed like in his sight? Had he rated her as an over-forward Miss-in-her-teens, a hoyden wearing her heart—ah, shame!—upon her sleeve? Or had he doubted her, worse humiliation still, as every honest man must doubt a girl who, under the convenient shield of Greek and Euclid, could lend herself to the small meanness of coquetry?

She walked to the window, buried her face amongst the cold, swift-falling rose-petals, then looked out on the landscape. Something strange had crept into its familiarity. There trotted Sylvestre, rake in hand, his livery exchanged for a fustian jacket, to the clover field. There

were the farm buildings, there was the row of poplars, showing distinct against the sunset. The China roses gave out their faint evanescent odour; the big vault of Northern sky was stainless. And here was Marjorie Bartrand, to all outward seeming the same Marjorie Bartrand as yesterday, but out of tune, for some queer reason, with her surroundings. The dew-smelling roses, the poplars, the farm buildings, yes, old Sylvestre himself, had been her friends through her whole span of childish life. With the new life that was awakening, with the stir of alien emotion in her breast, they were unsympathetic. Geoffrey Arbuthnot—what Geoffrey thought of her, what Geoffrey felt towards her—these were the questions burning in Marjorie's soul, transforming her, as no lengthening of skirts or plaiting of hair had ever done, from a child to a woman.

Suddenly a man's quick step advanced along the gravel road that led from the side lodge to the Manoir. The step stopped; Marjorie heard her grandfather's voice. She put

her head forth through the window, hoping, dreading that Geff, repentant after their half quarrel of the forenoon, might have walked out to Tintajoux—to be forgiven. In lieu of Geff's stalwart outline, the diminutive figure of the country postman met her sight. The Seigneur, ready always as a boy for the moment's amusement, was overlooking the contents of the village letter bag.

‘A letter for you, witch.’ Clear, resonant, rang the old voice, as Andros Bertrand caught sight of Marjorie. ‘A letter, and a bulky one. The address is written in a hand that savours of the Alma Mater. The postmark is “Local.” I am to open it for you, of course?’

‘If you do, I start for Spain to-night—this moment!’ cried Marjorie, with fine, Bertrand presence of temper; her grandfather meanwhile proceeding, in pantomime, to carry out his suggestion. ‘If you do, sir——’

But the sequel of the threat remained unspoken. Away flew Marjorie through the low schoolroom window, away, without drawing

breath, over flower border, over lawn, till she reached the Seigneur. A few seconds later, her letter—her first love-letter, whispered a voice in the white and girlish conscience—lay with seal unbroken between her hands.

She could not read it here, under this open largeness of air and sky, with her grandfather's searching eyes fixed on her face. She must heighten her pleasure, as not so many summers back she was wont to heighten the coveted flavour of peach or nectarine, by eked-out anticipation. Not here, not in the schoolroom, peopled by commonplace remembrances of Sophie le Patourel and all the long train of Sophie's predecessors. In this ineffable moment (are not our mistakes the sweetest things we taste on earth?) she must be alone, must know that a bolt was drawn between her happiness and the world. She entered the house with eager limbs, sped up the stairs, light still with the brief flicker that comes between sunset and dusk. She sought the shelter of her own room; a little white-draped room, where fragrant

alder-blooms, flecks of foam on a deep green sea of foliage, brushed the casement, where you could feel the coolness from the orchards, where only the tired evening call of the cuckoo, the murmur of late bees, still awork in blossom dust, broke silence.

‘Miss Marjorie Bartrand, Tintajoux Manoir, Guernsey.’

Prolonging her suspense to the utmost, Marjorie ran over aloud each syllable that Geff Arbuthnot’s hand had traced. Then, with fast-beating pulse, she opened the envelope, drew forth its contents, and prepared, delightedly, to read.

The love-letter was written upon blue, most unloverlike foolscap, and consisted of three words: ‘Geoffrey Arbuthnot’s compliments.’ Within, carefully folded, lay Marjorie’s waist-belt, intact, as when she looped it to his bunch of roses and heliotropes in the moonlight.

So she had won obedience. Even in the light matter of keeping or not keeping a bit of

ribbon, she had had her way. And her breast swelled with disappointment, the hot tears rushed to her eyes. In this moment Marjorie Bartrand's illogical heart owned Geoffrey as its master.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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